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JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

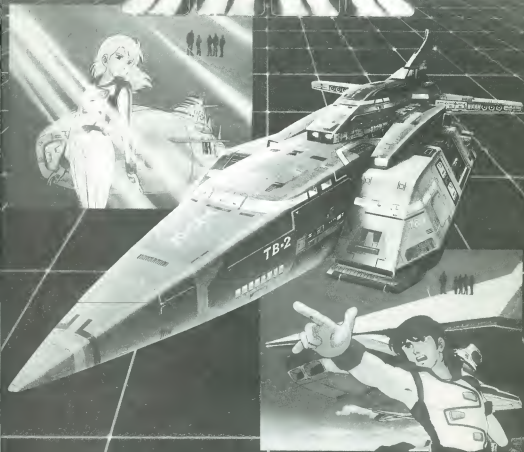
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GODZILLAS,
CATASTROPHES,
VAMPIRES &
MORE IN THE
TOHO LEGACY
1970-1979



THUNDERBIRDS 2086



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ENTERTAINMENT
-GOLD-



Editor and Publisher: Greg Shoemaker

Issue Number 15

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THE JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

I beg your indulgence while I rattle off a few thoughts before getting to the point of this column.

First, this issue reduces to zero on-hand stock of professionally published Japanese fantasy film related articles, this previously published material having been run to fill the void created by a dearth of fan contributions. It is one thing to put together a fan zine based upon submissions and quite another to be responsible for most of the text and layouts, pasteups, and camera work. This is not meant to slight the appreciated but few fan contributions printed here, but a content problem has existed nonetheless.

Second, Japanese studios, to whose fantasy output this book has been dedicated for fifteen years, have become unwilling to provide material for publication. It has always been difficult for me to work with the film companies, but with two exceptions none of the other numerous firms I solicited following the publication of issue fourteen responded to my inquiries.

Third, Production costs have skyrocketed. Simply put, more money is going out than coming in.

Fourth, the Japanese fantasy film market has radically been altered by animation. It has become the dominant film medium representing the sci, fantasy, and horror film genres in Japan. Live action movies having all but disappeared (JFF) born and nurtured semi-live-action releases, has been unable to negotiate the shift to studio production and fan interest. My files are linked to the past, while I stumble about blindly due to lack of exposure to the animated efforts.

Conclusion: The compounding of the points listed above has forced me to make a reluctant decision (JFF) and I am going to take a rest from publishing. This magazine may or may not be revived, but if it is, it will be the result of rethinking direction, format, and financing. Regardless, I am proud of my publishing accomplishments since 1968, and my life is richer because of this mag. Through (JFF) I have met a number of incredible people, several becoming very good friends, and I have learned much about Japanese sci, fantasy, and horror movies and TV. I can only hope you too have shared this pleasure. Take care.

Greg Shoemaker
Editor



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COVER: Shin Kikada as the vampire in Toho's LAKE OF DRACULA (1971); Mechagodzilla, shown inset

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安彦良和第一回監督作品

CRUSH JOE クラッシュ★ジョウ

原作・脚本 高千穂穂 監督・脚本・作画 安彦良和

製作 塚本喜博・伊藤昌典・美術 中村光敏・撮影 三宅隆夫・音楽 菅野文彦・編集 三宅隆夫・監製 高橋信也・プロデューサー 吉野洋子
声優 ジョウ 竹村 拓 アルフィン 佐々木幸人 クラッシュ ジョウ・タロス 三宅隆夫 金剛 製作・日本サンライズ 監製 高千穂穂

宇宙が熱い！

FAR EAST REPORT

Compiled by
August Ragone

Shinsei Ore

MONSTER KID (KAIBUTOU KUN, aka LIL MONSTER)
The first of several animated theatrical features starting the title character created by Fujio Fuyko. No footage from the Monster Kid's TV series appeared in this all new 76 minute film distributed by Toho in 1981.

21 **ERAGON** The adventures of a young boy who works as a bellhop in a sleazy international hotel Set in the future, the animated film saw release in 1981 by Toho

DORAMEMON FESTIVAL Fourth animated lecture in the Doramemon series about a cat from the future who is transported into our present time. This latest adventure which he shares with his human friend Nobita was distributed by Toho. Release date is unknown.

DOREMON—NORITA NO KATCHI/NORITA
HATTORI-KUN/FRAMMAN HADOMAN CA 507
TEKITA (p)res. DOREMON—NORITA'S UNDERSEA
TOWER OF DEMONS/HATTORI THE NOBU/
FRAMMAN—HADOMAN HAS COME) a triple bill
of short art features released May 12, 1963. Toko
handled the distribution.

INDIA'S EVIL WORLD ADVENTURE A new Coyotevue feature ca. starring Peasman and Hektor the raptor. The film is out for a March, 1984 release.

Terzaka, Pro.

UNDO ON WITCH ISLAND Announced last issue as Osamu Tezuka's UNDO 2, it was not released theatrically until July 16, 1983. The cartoon feature was animated by Sennia, not Tezuka Pro, and was distributed by Toei.

Page 8088 Made for TV unrelated feature which was broadcast Aug. 21, 1983

Shocklingu

SUPERMAN LOCKE (THOIN LOCK) Set for a March, 1994 release, this animated feature is based on the famous comic, and very adult Japanese comic series.

AI Planning Center

RAINBOWMAN, WARRIOR OF LOVE Animated TV series remake of the early 1980s live-action TV series with major changes including the 1988 formation of all 7 color element heroes into a dualistic team which. Series premiered Oct. 18, 1995

Santoro

BUTTON KIDZ 26 half hour episode, animated video series about berries geared to preschoolers in production

FLORENCE For release in 1985, an animated feature about fables designed for a more adult audience.

LEGEND OF SYRUS (1981 animated feature) (see 1977) #1-4) was broadcast on U.S. cable television in 1983 as **SEA PRINCE AND FIRE CHILD**.

Cinema Placet/Panorama Film

HOLLYWOOD—THE FANTASTIC COMEDY A liberation fantasy / musical feature released June 5, 1982. It was directed and scripted by Takahara.

CRUISER JOE (1983), the title of Terry Dogan's animated feature and a group of outer space soldiers of fortune promoted in poster art, left: *Thunderbeats* Pre-records its Ultra series in that series' most recent television entry, *ULTRAMAN 80* (1980). Below above: One year earlier, *Thunderbeats* Pre-sought out an animation firm for its cartoon series *THE ULTRAMAN* (1979), right.

Negative with stop codon sequences, assessed by Clontech Mastermix. Running time is 85 minutes

Haruki Kadokawa Office

GIRL WHO LEAPS OVER TIME (TOKI O KAKURU SHIMON) Published photos of this live-action feature suggest its story, and especially its soft photography, may have been influenced by the U.S. time-travel film **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**. Released July 16, 1983, the film was directed by Nobuhiko Ohtsuyashi (HOUSE, LEGEND OF THE ELEGANT CAT'S GHOST)

SWORD OF KAMUI A new version of the story of a real-life ninja Kamui to be directed by Taro Ma. This uncutrated feature is set for a release sometime in 1984.

PHARMACOPOLY (JENNIFER, aka DOL PHARMATON CONFLICT) An image produced by Janaki Kadohara and Shoshio Ishiguro, and directed by Taro Shi (JGALAXY EXPRESS 1998). An existence representing reality comes to earth and slowly, calculatingly begins conquering it... it has time so many times before to other planets. An equal and opposite existence materializes. The pol pols are in a cyber web from planet Venus a Japanese youth... a princess from Bangladesh... a young African American... a Chinese girl... a Hindu girl... and an Arab to battle the one released March 12, 1988, the Tokyo Vice distributed feature was scored by Yousuke Akai. With songs by Keith Emerson. (See article also where in this issue.)

ATG/Trade Office

THE LIVING HORROR BOARDSMAN—ROBERTU KOHBEI turns KOHBEI WHO IS LIVING THE GHOST STORY. A 78 minute live action feature which premiered Sept. 4, 1982 and was double billed with a remake of the 1959 horror film from Shintohs now AFD or Art Theatre Guild of Japan. **THE GHOST OF** *SHINTOH*, Shintohs new film from Shintohs, the

Director, who also helms a similar choice on the 1970s-era movie, *THE LIVING RICHES* (R, PG-13), a psychological mystery play inspired by Sigmund Freud and published in 1924. The three intense characters, played by Frances Farmer, John Hodiak, and Jacko Michalsky, are pulled in and out of control in which a single, unrelenting character's tirade with Agatha's husband is marauding and brutal to drive home his twisted ideas of love. The husband starts to drown his wife's sailor and tells, but in a vicious fight at the picture's conclusion, the sailor is killed. Husband and wife escape prosecution, yet their fight is fraught with constant worry of the death of their loved one. The two combine their journey, but there are few real clues, a shadow figure.

Since we have seen

SASUGA NO SARUTORI A fantasy comedy anime series featuring the adventures of the descendant of a famous ninja clan family. The show premieres Nov. 1, 1982 and stars Nika ("Barly") Senzaki, who will be featured here.

Nippon Animation

ALICE IN WONDERLAND (TAKUJI NO KOKU NO ALICE) An animated and serialized adaptation of the classic. (The original human film, 1953)

MYLIFE An animated video series which began airing Sept. 1988. It is a situation comedy with quite a bit of bawdiness thrown into its stories.

PEYMA ISLAND An animated fantasy comedy 1 show featuring a pink sea serpent, talking animals, mermaids, and other nautical wonders. Debuted June, 1985.

Mushi Pro.

GREEN STARK LAND (PRODUCED BY KUPFERS) Handed for a 1984 release is this Fantasy film about Chie, a wizard. To be released by Warner Home.



EAST REPORT

feature film in 4 channel Dolby stereo. To be released in 1988, the animated motion picture stars the pacesetter villain from Kurosawa's 1956 film ruler of Gambara. Though the Kurosawa hold will not appear in the film, A TV series may follow.

NAC

ROBOT ROBOCHE Animated TV series which premiered Oct. 7, 1982. This showrunnery comedy with robots was co-produced with Lenze Fleming and Dynamic Productions.

POSDARMO COSARIAN A robot adventure with invaders from another dimension, the Radex Star Empire versus Earth parknormalists. The animated TV series premiered July 6, 1983.

Nippon Sunrise

**THE DESIGN—A CONTACT/THE DESIGN—BE IN-
VITED** Two animated feature films released as a
3½-hour double bill on July 10, 1982. Footage from
the TV series *SPACE RUNAWAY EDSON* was
edited into the two features, although *BE INVITED*
has a considerable amount of new animation in
it, particularly the entire ending sequence. Created
and directed by Masayuki Tomino, the double bill
was not well received by Japanese audiences for a
solid story structure (beginning middle, end) was
missing from the two features. Mr. Tomino's
opinion was in question after the release of
these two movies, but the fans were wowed by
his work on *BATTLE MACHINE XAMMINE* and

ALMA BATTLER DUMBIE
CRUSHER JOK! An anime directed by Yoshitaka Masuda (JANGMAN) who is also credited with character design. The film is based on the popular Japanese novel series about the adventures of a space bounty hunter/sci-fi of fortune seeker called the Crusher Jock, a sort of outer space A TEAM. Haruka Takahashi scripted the screenplay. Premiering March 12, 1985, CRUSHER JOK! was distributed by Shochiku.

GLAMY GONG (GYOUM GONGU) Aired out of glam: subject television series set in the Ministry Zone of Aotearoa Island. Director Yoshikazu Yoshida's show has been temporarily shelved.

ALURA BATTLE DUNBINE (SEI SENSHI DUNBINE)
Animated television show produced by Yoshiyuki
Tsunoda and Hajime Yatani and based on a character
designed by Tetsuo Kigawa (DEON KAMEZU).
The series, which premiered Feb. 5, 1985 on TV

Anisa, begins on the planet Ilythien (Ile) (350,000 miles) to which people from Earth including heron (Shy) Zama, are summoned to become mercenaries. The civil war upon the group is the power struggle called Ansa Settles. The aliens of this world, civil beneath the surface of the sea while a great power struggle takes place between Lord Greiv and the other kingdoms, whose technology is organically based, whose battles occur between armies of insect like robots which run on Ansa.

VOTOMS SOUNDU KHI! SOTADUKE! aka **ARMORED TROOPER VOTOMS!** Animated TV series similar to GUNPLAM and which premiered April 1, 1993 on TV Tokyo. These robot adventures set on the planet Melkie and involve ancient war against the Armored Projects. The program resembles He-Man's Sorcerer's Prophecy in design using concepts rejected for **MOBILE SUIT GUNPLAM** such as the armored trooper: escape dogs which are 4 meters high.

RASUNGE CRASH! totally an animated TV series. **BATTLE MECHA XANGULE**, this cartoon

It also includes footage from the series as well as new material. Directed by Yoshiyuki Tanaka with character design by Tetsuro Higashimura and mecha design by Kenji Okawara and Tetsuya Ichihara, Tanaka Higashimura composed the score. Shōshiki distributed GBAFF11 which premiered July 9, 1993 and was a double billed with DOCUMENT OF FANG FANG DOGRAM. Another associated feature with new footage and material culled from the 25 episode TV series SOLAR FANG DOGRAM. The files are a documentation of the

MOBILE BATTLE ELGAM Animated of robot TV program now in production and featured after AURA BATTLE GUNBOM.

GALACTIC COMBAT YPAIN (GINGA KIKORU WAKA) Animated robot TV series with mecha designs by Gizaoka Kameo (GUNBOM) The program premiered Oct. 1983.

Studio Pelaru

HADJINIS KUNEMAMI Animated TV series about a little witch from the creators of **NOISY PEOPLE FROM SPACE**. Program began July 1, 1993.

DALLOS Animated sci-fi television series, reportedly produced for videotape release, began now in Dec. 1993.

Tatsunoko Pro.

DESTINY SQUAD This animated TV series announced in pre production last issue, has been delayed due to an inability to sell the concept to anyone. Reported objections are the show's high intellectual level and the lack of stories which can be turned into monster poses.

SUPERBOOK and **THE FLYING HOUSE** both animated programs which were broadcast in the 1970s on the Christian Broadcasting Network, a cable TV channel, are based on stories from the Bible and have been dubbed into English by Gil Mack, Ray Owens, Billie Lou Wertz, Hal Shader and Sonia Owens: the original cast voices of **ASTRO BOY** and **KIMBA**. The shows premiered the last week of October 1980 on CBN and a **SUPERBOOK** Christmas special aired on regular U.S. network television. Echo Productions, Inc. of the Hollywood area produced the series.

SUPER DIMENSION FOREVER! MACROSS (JH)
SOTA YOSHIMIZU's Animated television series premiering Oct. 3, 1982 with a special one hour first episode, all remaining episodes are a half hour in length. Character design is by Masakazu Matsuno and mecha design is by Shido Nae (Macross began work in the business in the Shido Nae Animation group) in the first episode a huge space craft named Macross crash lands on Earth. *Macross* is a mecha, but it's a giant.

an action sequence to push her and another crew member up the stairs, just in time to fire the Macross cannons against the invading Zentradi space fleet, dragging the people of Earth into a great space war. Seventeen years old, Hikaru Ichijima pilot of Volvryon NT II is the hero of the street. Heroine Lin Minmei, a fifteen year old, becomes a singer in later episodes. Title of the TV special: **MACROSS: THE MOVIE**. **MACROSS** is "MA" means "NOW" (A **MACROSS** movie is being prepared for an August 1984 release). **PERSONAL POLICEMAN URUSHIMAN** (JEIJI KESAKI) **URUSHIMAN**. Although Ishi's **TECHNI-**

[illegible]

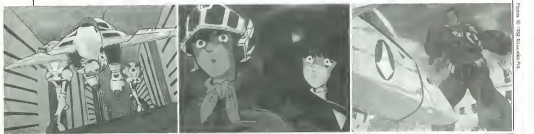
Robby Enterprises

LUM, THE INVADER GIRL (SUZUSE SAKURA—ONLY YOU) **LINE:** NOISY PEOPLE FROM SPACE—**ONLY YOU!** All new animated theatrical release based on characters from the TV series. Lum is owned by her old friend Aika, who has a score to settle with her for all the practical jokes they played on each other over the years. It's time to pull off the best practical joke of all—by setting her sights on Azusa, knowing full well about Lum's attraction for this boy. Teles distributed the 10-minute film.

Movie International Co.

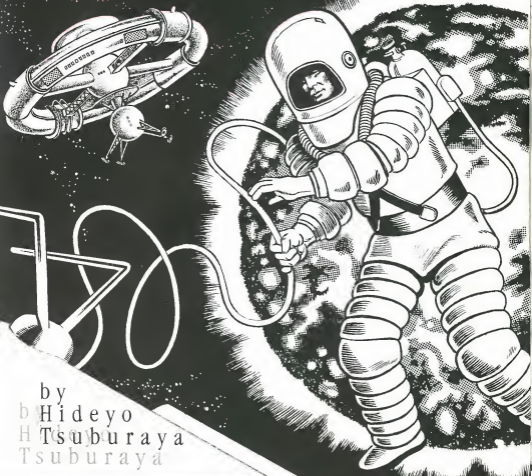
SPECIAL ARMORED TROOPER DOWNSIDE
(TICKLEMEHE) DOWNSIDE Another and series about
a combination robot protecting Earth (though set
100 years in the future. Premiered Oct. 1983.

A press conference for *Star Wars* Pro's video series *REACT* (JACK 11/18/88) shows personnel going to marvel at the lunchtime entrance of *Myth* Jack. From left: Max Baer, Hibel, Wakako Hironaka, Hirsch, Minner, the late Ed Zuburayev (effects director), and Neeko Koko. Below are scenes from the end series *MACHINES* (11/18/88), produced by *Star Wars* Pro. Right: here *Star Wars* VP-11 fighter is under attack by the Hakaner Jet. Zenbilly Feels Ceepee, here and here on. Hakaner Ichigo and Iren Miyawaki. Left, the VP-11 fighter, capable of changing into 3 kinds of machines, is shown here in its *Iron Dragon* design, called *Gawill*, being chased by *Figure 1*. The robot design of the *Gawill* is named *Antoid*.

[illegible]

GORATH

— R E T R O S P E C T I V E —



by
Hideyo
Tsuburaya
Tsuburaya

It is the year 1980. A heavenly body hurtling through space has been discovered by Earth orbiters and deep probes. The ion drive-propelled J-X Hawk, commanded by Chief Astronaut Sonoda and sent to analyze the phenomenon, approaches too close and is sucked into the fiery object. But not before relaying important data back to Earth. A second manned ship, the J-X Eagle, survives intact a similar reconnaissance mission, except for one of its crew, Cadet Astronaut Katsuo Kanai, almost lost on an EVA maneuver and suffering amnesic shock because of the orb's hypnotic fury. With the information obtained from both space observations, scientists determine the meteor, code-named Gorath and measuring 6,000 times the mass of Earth, is bound on a collision course with the planet. A U.N. appointed commission promptly announces two courses of action: Attempt either a shift of Earth from its orbit or destruction of Gorath in its flight. The former plan is selected, and soon a large scale operation at the South Pole is underway with construction of massive hydrogen gas jets required for the move. But as the meteor plummets earthward, its gravitational pull violently shreds celestial bodies in the vicinity of its path and incites calamities of nature around the Earth, seriously hampering the South Pole progress. Pressure for completion mounts when it is determined only 100 days remain until impact. Scientists, technologists, and operations director Dr. Tazawa are near the breaking point as zero hour approaches; the sight of the threatening red meteor in the daytime sky jolts Katsuo Kanai out of his delirium. At the crucial moment, with the gas jets at full throttle, the Earth slowly moves out of orbit, and Gorath flames on into space in search of other prey. The people of a once-doomed planet are rejoicing, praying—and united. Still, another monumental chore awaits: Moving planet Earth back to its original trajectory. Mankind has attained the impossible once; the second time is just as conceivable.

The plot of Toho International's GORATH (1962) smacks of a Japanese WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE (U.S., 1951), but beyond the basic premise of an imminent planetary collision, the two films bear little resemblance. Perhaps a more bonafide comparison can be made with Daiei's color production, WARNING FROM SPACE (1956), which attempted to portray a similar saga, but, suprisingly, visitors from space advise us of the method to save the Earth. GORATH's screenplay, however, is based upon one of several short stories penned by a former Japanese Air Force pilot, Jojiro Okami, whose writing laid the groundwork for three other Toho SF pictures, THE MYSTERIANS, BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE, and DOGORA, THE SPACE MONSTER. That stock science fiction plot elements exist in GORATH cannot be disputed, but unlike its U.S. counterparts from the Fifties and Sixties, the script links the distinguished scientist, heroic rocket crew, crusty military general, and romantic interest, amid their common goal of survival, in a most logical fashion, albeit one decidedly Japanese. This Japanese temperament is the type of thing which American audiences tend to misunderstand and generally disparage due to difficulties in translation and determined Western prejudices.

Isihro Honda, director of GORATH, right. Below, bulky space craft interiors, a zero gravity simulator, and the J-X Hawk model, all designs of the times



Photos: © 1964/1968 Science Pictures Corp.



WHAT WALRUS?

Perhaps the most controversial aspect regarding GORAEH in this country is the much discussed but rarely seen segment concerning Toho's onus present giant monster, in this case an over sized walrus, played by Haruo Nakajima, the same gentleman in the Godzilla suit for the monster's first appearance in 1954. Although it would certainly seem to be a colorful element to the overall film, the girazly character is nowhere to be found within the U.S. release Americanized and distributed by the now defunct Brenco Pictures Corp. Light can be shed at last upon the mystery.

Magma was the walrus' title in the Orient, although it went unnamed in the picture. As the accompanying walls illustrate, the monster was clearly the walrus-like and conformed to the standard towering proportions common among Toho giants. Its skin was smooth and gray in color, and its eyes glowed like powerful search beacons. More peculiar was the walrus' occasional upright stance allowing the beast the use of its mighty flippers to strike out at the man-made obstructions violating its Antarctic habitat. Magma's cry, however, described as an eerie high pitched squeal, belied to do his massive proportions justice.

The appearance of the walrus in GORAEH totaled approximately three minutes in duration, and roughly the sequence went as follows: Due to tremendous heat generated by the land jets at the South Polar installation, some of the basin masses there begin to melt away. This releases Magma from a long and icy imprisonment, presenting serious peril to the entire Antarctic operation. As two men enter one of the sub stations for an inspection, a great vibration begins and the top of the structure collapses. This is when Magma makes his entrance, and if the viewer of the U.S. version is aware of this, he can discern a huge flipper coming through the roof. In a long shot the walrus removes his flipper from the

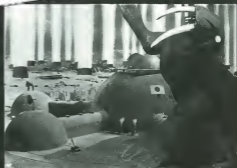


Photo © 1962 Toho International Film Co. Ltd.

down, and the film cuts to a matte shot of the awe-struck guards looking at Magma who is framed by the hole in the shattered roof. Another long shot has the monster rearing up and moving away from the wreckage. After several live action inserts, Magma is next seen poking its head out from a valley filled with an icy mist. Actors Ryo Hebe and Takekichi Shimura, having been quickly summoned to the scene of the emergency by Kan Uehara, observe the destruction from a jet-powered hovercraft. Finding Magma at the bottom of the deep glacial ravine, the three men immediately take advantage of the situation and proceed to blast at the receding slopes with the aircraft's laser weapon. Searing rays create a massive avalanche which cascades onto the giant beast, covering it with tons of ice, snow, and rock. Thinking the walrus dead, the men land and search for the body, but Magma breaks free from the rubble, and in a matte shot the monster's head is shown limning the edge of the escape as the men scamper back to their ship in hasty retreat. Once in the air, the men again let loose the laser, this time scoring a direct hit which kills the behemoth. The plane then passes over the walrus' dead and bleeding carcass. This final scene is in the U.S. print and can be seen upon careful inspection.

The giant walrus episode certainly seemed harmless enough, following a tradition set by monstrous menaces in previous Toho films. The people at Brenco Pictures, who had affectionately nicknamed the beast Wally the Walrus, thought differently, a result of the creature's design, lack of surface texturing, and inaccurate animal movement.

Initially, it was the intention of Brenco to retain the sequence intact. Realizing the problem it was up against, however, Brenco attempted to doctor the footage in several ways with the hope of minimizing the inherent humor of the walrus. One method involved disguising Magma behind a fog created artificially in an optical printer. Also, the monster's harmless shreds were removed to be substituted by Rodan's cackling. All in all, everything short of censure bars across the walrus' eyes was used to diminish the comical tone of the beast's appearance.

Several release prints were subsequently struck to test audience reaction with the walrus scenes retained, though in their rebroadcast state. It was at this point that Brenco backed off on plans to keep the sequence as it was found to draw more chuckles than gasps. Last-minute editing removed all shots of Magma from the negative, and the script was revised to delete any reference to the monster in the dialogue. When the official release finally materialized, all that remained of the segment was a puzzling effort on the part of three screenwriters to show a laser into a dark ravine with nary a walrus in sight.

Heritage Enterprises, presently distributor of the film to U.S. television stations, is aware of the plight of Magma, but indicated it was not prepared to tackle the job of reestablishing the creature's place in the film.

Scenes of a giant walrus, left, were excised from U.S. release. Kan Ishii, composer of GORATH's score, right, and an example of his arrangements sustained by his own effort, below.



A mechanized miniature of the walrus was intercut with a man-in-suit creature. Note wires to the left.

THE SCORE

Kan Ishii's score for GORATH is low key when compared to Akira Kikuchi's compositions for Ishii's films THE MYSTERIANS and BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE, both predecessors of GORATH. It is then puzzling why Toho chose GORATH, from all pictures in this period, to produce with the added dimension of their stereophonic Perspecta Sound process. A score with greater emphasis and style could certainly have made better use of the technical benefits offered in a multi channel presentation.

Owing to the subdued mixing of the music within the balance of the soundtrack, it is difficult for the listener to readily identify or isolate the motifs (musical themes that carry the bulk of the movie's action). Composer Ishii was fortunate, however, in that his orchestration did not allow these themes to be cluttered among counterpointing harmonies involving special accompaniments. Rather, by utilizing a heavy brass section combined directly with a lower string section, the melodic arrangement sustained itself through its own effort. One of the few themes that does make the listener as a result of this technique is shown in the artwork on this page.

As with most other Japanese composers who have been heavily influenced by Western musical trends, the works of Kan Ishii are well romanticized in the Old World tradition. It is not unusual, then, that romantic composers such as Ishii and Kikuchi have criticized the modern avant-garde intellectual approach in preference to their own folk based writing, composed from the heart rather than from the head.

The GORATH score shows evidence of this in the occasional use of the solo viola, a low-stringed violin normally used to create a sad and melancholy background. The absence of more pervasive and woodwind instruments in the orchestra also serves to take the bite out of the musical edge, leaving a slightly mellowed flavor even during the more tense moments of the picture, in comparison with its peers, the work is a slightly subdued one, assertive without the pompous capriciousness of Kikuchi, melodramatic without the continental spices of Sato, and contemporary without the brassiness of Miyoshi or Kikuchi. The problem with the GORATH score, then, is that it does not comply with the demands of the visual component. The lowkey melancholic orchestrations are the last thing for which the film is remembered.

Born in Tokyo in 1921, Ishii received his musical exposure through his father, Kaku Ishii, himself a master in contemporary choreography and likewise heavily influenced by Western trends. After receiving formal training under Itojiro Kouchi at the Musashino Academy of Music, Ishii left for Germany in 1952 to study composing and conducting under Karl Wehle. Since his return to Japan in 1954, he has been active in both conducting and composing and is currently professor of music composition at the Toho Gakuin University. His many works, including Song of a Whetted Tree and the Swo, Birth of a Human Being, Sinfonia Amu, and Kaco, have drawn acclaim from his countrymen as well as from circles abroad. In 1962 Ishii's work was to culminate in a collaboration with the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre, giving the world his monumental Marmos ballet suite.

One can only speculate why Kan Ishii was chosen to write for GORATH. Perhaps it was a result of the international flavor generated by Marmos which led to his contract with Toho. What does bear weight in the final analysis is that Ishii has not done another motion picture score since.



© 1962 Toho International Film Co. Ltd.

INTO ENGLISH

Americanization of a foreign import can amount to an experience nothing short of a nightmare, as many U.S. production supervisors will testify, and GORATH proved no exception.

The altered version of GORATH which eventually found its way into theaters on this side of the Pacific was tied up well over one year in post-production work here, specifically from late 1962 when it was purchased until completion in mid-1964. This rather lengthy period of time included a number of pre-release test screenings for both public and media, only audiences that at served to determine the film's final cut. Regardless of these cautious and time-consuming maneuvers, the picture as released failed to attain its potential.

The English-language dubbing, directed by Ryder Sound Services, is from a John Lucas script, a name familiar to STAR TREK followers. Though the dubbed dialogue is reasonably credible and an adequate degree of lip-sync is maintained, sometimes quite precariously due to the de-emphasized lip movement common to Japanese acting, it becomes apparent that the new voices for the Japanese actors sound alike. Only four Americans were used to breathe life into the muted Japanese lips. There also appears to have been little conscious effort to have the dubbers use Oriental accents. Add a defect in the Lucas script which rarely bestows names upon any of the screen characters, and the sum is a series of people with a dismal lack of definition.

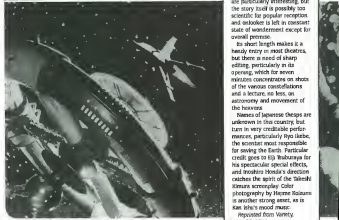
Surprisingly, all the non-Japanese actors speak English in the original film and are subtitled whenever they say their lines. For some reason, the voices were dubbed for the U.S. version.

Americanization meant a lot more than language transplanting. The revised U.S. script called for considerable editing, incorporating several scene deletions and additions. Besides the excised "giant walrus" sequence already discussed, much other footage was judged unsuitable for American audiences and thus was omitted. In a few instances, celluloid surgery was unavoidable. Case in point: A sequence wherein the astronaut cadets of the JX Hawk bid adieu to their departing comrades was originally followed by a military song, given vocal credence by the now airborne cadets. The lyrics gave testimony to the young astronauts' patriotic allegiance to their homeland and undying courage in the face of various interplanetary calamities. There can be little doubt why this interlude was removed. Also omitted with little regard for the personnel who sweated over the filming was the entire bulk of the Japanese production credits and cast listing, replaced by a simple five-line title card.

The Japanese film opens with its credits and fairly nice theme music, both missing in the U.S. print. The story begins as two women are driving along a highway and stop just outside a tunnel. Both are suddenly startled, not by a thunderstorm as in Brecco's release, but by the nearby blast off of the JX Hawk spaceship. Just before the Hawk is destroyed in the first reel, the crew all list out a "Banana!" which is not in the English print.

Most of the scenes specifically shot for American viewing can be discovered during the first reel where introductory narration, illustrated by several dissolves through star

Right: The detailed miniature work which makes believable the incredible events occurring in Toho's 1962 film, GORATH. U.S. distributor Brecco Pictures Corp., feeling the effects subpar, optically superimposed a layer of drifting fog over much of effects director Tsuburaya's footage.



'Japanese sci-fi film with exploitation possibilities for general market.'

Exploitation potential of this Japanese-made sci-fi is considerable, pegged on pic's subject of a giant, oriental body hurtling toward Earth and certain destruction of our own planet. Japanese producers in the past have displayed great ingenuity along this line of scientific speculation, and GORATH, name of the so-called flaming object, lends certain credence. Special effects are particularly interesting, but the story itself is possibly too scientific for popular reception and onlooker is left in constant state of wonderment except for overall premise.

To short length makes it a handy entry in most theatres, but there is need of sharp editing, particularly in its opening, which for seven minutes concentrates on shots of the various constellations and a lecture, no less, on astronomy and movement of the heavens.

Names of Japanese thespians are unknown in this country, but turn in very creditable performances, particularly Ryo Ikebe, the scientist most responsible for saving the Earth. Particular credit goes to Eiji Yashuraya for his spectacular special effects, and Toshiro Honda's direction catches the spirit of the Toho! film's screenplay. Color photography by Hayato Ichikawa is another strong asset, as is Ken Ichi's mood music. Reported from Variety, May 20, 1964.

Photos: © 1962 Toho International Film Co., Ltd.; © 1964/1968 Brecco Pictures Corp.

怪星激突の危機迫る！地球の軌道脱出なるか



総天然色

GORATH

池部良 佐野由 白水昭 平田健 佐原健 二瓶正 志村 田崎 小沢栄 佐々木 西沢 河津清 上原三 池部良 佐野由 白水昭 平田健 佐原健 二瓶正 志村 田崎 小沢栄 佐々木 西沢 河津清 上原三



charts, foretells of the impending cosmic disasters. Though not in the Japanese version, the material does succeed as part of the whole.

However, an unforgivable travesty was committed on a number of special effects scenes appearing in the destruction episode at the movie's climax. Brenco had little respect for the miniature work so it attempted to disguise the "blunders" ex post facto. Through dust of the all-purpose optical printer, a dense layer of drifting fog was superimposed over the footage, and the light intensity was diminished. The resulting effect renders a good portion of the highly detailed miniatures as vague set pieces.

Brenco made several additional modifications to GORATH which are worth mentioning. The meteor does not make any noise as it travels through space in Toho's original, but for the U.S. market a shrill noise was added. Also, the destruction of the moon at the beginning of Gorath's advance on Earth originally occurred at the conclusion of the film, while Brenco scheduled the destruction just prior to Earth's escape from the collision with the planetary body.

Although GORATH's Japanese version featured a process called *Perspecta Sound* which utilized a pseudo-stereo technique, the U.S. version was issued with a monaural track, in spite of the claim to ore in stereo contained in some advertising material. Writers in Brenco's publicity department were either guilty of stretching the truth or confused by the concept of stereo, which in that period was still somewhat in its infancy. Further misrepresentation may be noted on advertising for an earlier Brenco release, Toho's *THE HUMAN VAPOR*.

The persons behind the tampering were the late Edward L. Alpersen, Sr. (producer of *INVADERS FROM MARS*) and Stanley D. Meyer, directors of *Alamo Pictures Corporation* of Los Angeles. Fortunately, these gentlemen took sufficient interest in the Toho product to purchase three of their films for release in America, the third picture being *THE LAST*

Special visual effects director, the late Eiji Tezuka, right. Eiji, above, at work; at play, and in a moment of contemplation for GORATH's harried effects man.



WAR, forming their own small film company in the process. The odds are against success for newly formed firms in the film industry, and such was Brenco's fate. It closed its doors in 1969.

Reportedly, most of the company's distribution deals were directed in a haphazard manner. A contract was drawn up with one south of the border picture outlet, but even that unceremoniously bit the dust. The result was that GORATH, along with the remainder of the Brenco distributed films, was seen at only a scant few theatrical bookings in the southern and western United States, making the titles generally unknown elsewhere. A possible explanation for the floundering can be traced back to a rift that was developing between the Alpersen-Meyer partnership which left corporate control in a sorely misguided state. Even a seelapse of GORATH in 1968, paired with *THE HUMAN VAPOR*, failed to stir up enough interest to bring the company back to its feet.

Finally, the firm was dismantled after the death of Alpersen on July 3, 1969, with Meyer taking all of the Brenco film properties with him. Needless to say, a profit was never turned on Brenco's original investment, leaving former employees with bitter memories of the entire fiasco.

After a few years, GORATH and other Brenco releases were picked up by Heritage Enterprises for distribution to tele-

vision in the U.S. With the conversion from Toho's anamorphic format to the comparably minuscule television tube, much of GORATH's original scope is lost, but apparently more viewers are seeing the motion picture now on TV than through the earlier theatrical releases, which may be the only encouraging news ever offered for this film in America.

The author wishes to extend his gratitude to the following for their generous assistance and cooperation:

Osamu Tanaka, Maji Kimura, and S. Ohta of Toho International Film Co., Ltd.; Andrew F. Beech and David A. Hixon of Heritage Enterprises, Inc.; Kenneth Wienberg of Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation; John Meredith Lucas of Paset Productions; Alberto Giles of Crown-International Pictures; Vernon Alves of Consolidated Film Industries; Pamela Wittle of The American Film Institute; Steven Rasper of The Cinema Arts; Also, Nettie Cohen, Gregory Peret, Ed Godziszewski, Michael Hagan, Hajime Ishida, Akihiro Kitajima, Mes. Stanley D. Meyer, Thomas Murdoch, Hideo Murata, Kenji Ohtsuka, Toshiyuki Shigetani, and Alex Wald.

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TATSUNOKI PRODUCTIONS

TELEVISION ANIMATION

This article continues the Tatsunoko filmography initiated last issue. If the reader remembers, six superhero/robot programs were synopsized, making evident the programming's appetite for that portion of the genre. The series presented herein are as varied as the last group was not—and are most representative of Tatsunoko's catalog.

PAUL'S MIRACULOUS ADVENTURE

When his friend Nisa is kidnapped by Bellocan, the demonic ruler of another world, Paul undertakes a risky expedition to rescue his playmate. The young boy is aided by Paikun, a plush doll with magic powers. Together they plunge into Bellocan's dimension of living toys where both are beset by difficulties as well as a variety of delightful wonders. (50 thirty minute episodes, October 3, 1976/September 11, 1977)

THE GENIE FAMILY

Three Arabian genies reside in an old jar. A sneeze will bring forth Hasehoo, a yawn summons Ya-ahn, a hiccup calls out Eppah. Once out of their domicile, they must grant wishes to whomever released them, until an inadvertent sneeze, yawn, or hiccup sends them back. Discovery of the jar in a modern residential neighborhood proves to be a mixed blessing to the new owner. Hasehoo's clumsiness attempts to obey his master's wishes result in a disaster, and mischievous Ya-ahn twists the wishes in ways her master would never have dreamed. (104 fifteen minute episodes, October 5, 1969/September 27, 1970). HAKUSHAN, the Japanese title of the series, and the father genie's original name, is supposed to be the phonetic spelling of a sneeze.

HYPO AND THOMAS

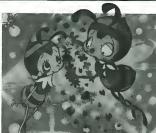
Thomas, a cunning bird, sponges off a good-natured hippopotamus named Hypo. Though Thomas shares a symbiotic relationship with Hypo, living in the bear's mouth, he always tries to out-smart and lord it over his host. Their friendship and cooperation endures despite the frequent quarrels. (300 three minute episodes, January 1, 1971/September 30, 1972)

TAMAGON THE COUNSELOR

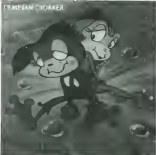
Tamagon, a lovable monster, acts as advisor to those in trouble, asking only eggs in payment, he goes to work after devouring his fee. Despite his schemes, Tamagon's service usually ends in total failure whereupon he winds up being chased by hisirate clients. (195 three minute episodes, October 5, 1972/September 28, 1973)

TEMPLE THE BALLOONIST

A little girl named Temple, who is deeply fond of music, happens to board a balloon one day. She is excited by her aerial journey until the lighter-than-air craft begins drifting away from her parents and home. Eventually, Temple encounters a drom-



HUTCH THE HONEYBEE



DEMETAN CROAKER



BELLY AND LILLIBIT



mer boy and his animal friends, musicians all, who play their music to keep up the girl's spirits. The encouragement then sets out with Temple to help her find her way home. (26 thirty minute episodes, October 1, 1977-March 25, 1978)

THE ADVENTURES OF HUTCH THE HONEYBEE

Hutch, a young honeybee, becomes a solitary wanderer after his hive home is destroyed by invading wasps. He ventures into the world to search for his mother whom he has never seen. During his travels, he experiences much bitterness and sorrow, yet gradually he also learns of love, friendship, courage, and other virtues which make life worthwhile. (First series: 91 thirty minute episodes, April 7, 1970-October 25, 1971/Second series: 26 thirty minute episodes, April 3, 1974/September 27, 1974). Original title: HUTCH (or HACHI) THE HONEYBEE.

JUDO BOY

When a youth, endowed with impressive athletic ability, is left alone upon his father's sudden death, he faces many hardships as his quest to find a new life for himself. Eventually, the boy is successful thanks to a determination and willingness to work hard. (26 thirty minute episodes, April 2, 1969/September 24, 1969)

BELLY AND LILLIBIT

In a Lilliputian society hidden within a forest lives Belly, a witty, tomboy girl who lost her parents in infancy. She resides with an uncle, the only doctor in the woods, whose habit of drunkenness bothers the little sprite. So Belly doesn't mince words in trying to keep the man under control. Belly has a friend in Lillibit, a boy with a large streak of curiosity, and the two share adventures with some of the animals of the forest. The tales of the miniature community are lessons in human relationships and a respect for nature. (26 thirty minute episodes, January 7, 1980/June 30, 1980)

THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO

Pinocchio, the wooden marionette of Colodi's classic, is given new life by the Blue Fairy, yet as a living toy he is faced with alienation and abuse rather than acceptance by humans. Despite his frustrating intrigues, Pinocchio is constantly encouraged by the love of the Blue Fairy and the faith of old Gepetto, the wood carver who made him, as he persists in his efforts of becoming a human boy. (52 thirty minute episodes, January 4, 1972/December 26, 1972). Original title: MDCK, THE OAK PUPPET. Two episodes from the series were released theatrically in Japan by Toho. KASHINOKI MOKKU, scripted by Fuyumasa Inumura, in March 21, 1975, and KASHINOKI MOKKU—BOKU WA NAKANAL, scripted by Kiyoshi Sakai, in July 22, 1972. Both 25 minute shorts were directed by Ippai Mori and produced by Kenji Yoshida.

DEMETAN CROAKER, THE FROG BOY

Though Demetan's family is so poor it is unable to send him to school in his woodland pond community,

PRODUCTIONS

N FROM THE SEAHORSE

by Fred Patten



TAMAGON THE LOUDEST



HYPPA AND THIMAS



TEMPLE THE BALL AND



PINOCCHIO

he has a friend in Katsuragi, the daughter of the pond's rich ruler, a man incensed by this relationship which he seeks to break up. Nevertheless, the young frogs continue to love with courage and confidence, and also guide the heartless leopard frog to an understanding of justice and generosity. Gradually, the community responds to the couple's sincerity and joins them in a goal for a brighter future. (39 thirty minute episodes, January 2, 1973-September 25, 1973)

SPEED RACER

Only in his teens, Speed Racer drives a very special automobile, the Mach 5, in races throughout the world. Designed by his father, a retired professional racer, the car is equipped with features which enable Speed to drive over difficult terrain and through all manner of obstacles. The youth uses the device frequently since he is often in competition with unscrupulous drivers backed by international criminals. Speed and his pit crew, girlfriend Trixie, kid brother Sprinkle, and Sprinkle's pet chimp Choo-choo, brave fast-paced escapades in exotic settings around the globe, proving that quick wits and fair play are always sure winners. (52 thirty minute episodes, April 2, 1967-March 31, 1968). Original title: MACH 5. GDI GDI GDI The words GDI GDI GDI are used both in the American sense of cheering on a favorite and in the Japanese sense of the word five, hence Speed's Mach Five racer.

Tatsunoko Productions is in a unique situation in that the studio apparently owns three time slots on Japanese TV. When a series is concluded a new one begins in the same time slot the next week to keep it filled. Tatsunoko's GATCHAMAN II was followed immediately by GATCHAMAN-F which was directly followed by MUTEXING (Sunday, 6:00-6:30 p.m.). GORDIAN was succeeded by GOLDBLINDIAN (Thursday, this changed from an original time slot of 7:30-8:00 a.m. to 6:30-7:00 p.m.). The Time Bokan shows have followed one another consecutively (Saturday, 6:30-7:00 p.m.).

The original TIME BOKAN program was such a success that when Tatsunoko felt the concept had run its course, a new show was created using look-alike characters with new names, costumes, and a slightly different time travel gimmick. Merchandising opportunities were probably also a consideration.

An explanation of the Time Bokan name may be found in the translation of the Japanese word bokan, which is a sound effect for an explosion, like "wham" or "boom!" Time Bokan could therefore be considered a humorous play on Time Bomb, especially since all entries involve traveling through time. The action centers on two groups which travel to different periods of the past, the teenage boy and girl heroes and the sexy villainess and her two klutzy stooges. What they do in the past depends upon the premise of the programs: observe the past, try to change the past, attempt to steal treasures from the past, and so on.

The shows in the series so far are: TIME BOKAN (December 4, 1975-December 25, 1976), WATAMAN (January 1, 1977-January 27, 1979), ZENDAMAN (February 3, 1979-January 26, 1980), OTASUKEMAN (February 2, 1980-January 31, 1981), WATODETAMAN (February 7, 1981-February 6, 1982), IPATSUMAN (February 13, 1982-?). Next in the series will be ITADARIMAN. ■



THE ONII FAMILY



PAUL'S MIRACULOUS ADVENTURE



the toho legacy

IN THE FINAL CHAPTER OF MYTH, MONSTERS, AND MYOPIA THE TOHO FANTASY IMAGE FADES TO BLAH.

Under scrutiny in this final installment of *JFF*'s multi-section, chronological film history of Toho International is the period from 1970 through 1979. The preservation of the studio as leader of the genre is at stake.

Allocating most of its resources to fantasy, sf, and horror in the first half of the Seventies, Toho earmarked a large percentage of those resources for giant monster fare, the studio issuing a new title each of the decade's first six years, five of which premiered consecutive releases starring Godzilla. The reptile's most-favored status soured, and the veteran was forced to retire in 1975, in spite of mutterings from studio executives to the contrary. It was reassuring to note Ishiro Honda's return in the final Godzilla color feature some 21 years after the director's GOJIRA first attacked the screen in black and white.

Not all of Toho's money was invested in monster stock. The studio resurrected the European myth of vampire and werewolf with some artistic and financial

success. There was also a nod toward the disaster category of movies and even a genuflection to *STAR WARS*, but Toho's space opera failed miserably to emulate the impact of its progenitor while the studio's first epic disaster release went on to become an unmitigated winner aesthetically surpassing the later American works.

Genre movie activity at Toho waned as the decade elapsed. Escalating production budgets due to inflated special effects prices and increased studio time were taking their toll. And Toho, never a firm to diverge far from its methodical approach to filmmaking, failed to realize that audiences were weary of the repetitive stories and atrophied effects techniques. As a result, their pictures were becoming too expensive to produce for a selected foreign and domestic market which was diminishing. The result: The final decade of Toho's domination of the Japanese fantasy, sf, and horror film scene appeared to be at hand.



Shin Kikida as *The Man Who Resembles A Shadow* in scenes taken from the finale of *THE BLUCCO: THIRSTY EYES* (1979), redneck LAKE OF DRACULA far apart and the second of three Michio Yamamoto directed vampire films. The grisly disfigurement of Toho's villain was snipped from the picture when sold to USA for a U.S. TV release. The Japanese folkloric basis for the vampire's makeup belies the Western approach of the film.

Article by Greg Shoemaker

the thriller

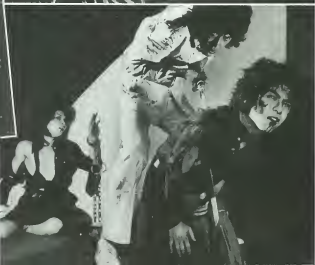
It was in 1970 when the Japanese horror film surfaced in modern dress through the eyes of director Machio Yamamoto. His brand of suspense was unfortunately ingrained on only four pictures, the first of which, **TERROR IN THE STREETS**, was a tense and briskly-paced thriller sprinkled with a number of psychological shocks.

TERROR's screenplay spotlights a woman who finds herself totally disoriented when everyone she knows—relatives, boyfriend, friends—claims never to have seen her before. The resolution reveals the deception as a plan to drive the woman insane.

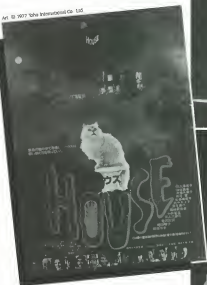
The success of his first movie enabled Yamamoto to make **THE BLOODTHIRSTY GOLL** (1970), which was succeeded by **THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES** (1971) and **THE BLOODTHIRSTY ROSE** (1974), a trio of vampire movies. The few American reviewers of these horror entries were quick to praise the director's economic approach to storytelling, "the master's economy," said Howard Thompson of the *New York Times* in a companion he made to the late Alfred Hitchcock.

THE BLOODTHIRSTY GOLL, listed in English promotional material from Toho as **THE VAMPIRE GOLL**, involves a missing male, his dead lover, and the man's sister who decides to visit the dead woman's home. The meeting commences an unleashing of strange and startling events when the living encounter the undead.

Reviewer Thompson made what could be considered a continuation of his earlier Yamamoto/Hitchcock analogy in his review for **VAMPIRE GOLL**. "Yamamoto" tells his story



Art © 1977 Toho International Co. Ltd.



Poster art, above, for **HOUSE**, an offbeat horror entry in which the furnishings of the mansion chow down on its guests. Shin Kishida, portraying a vampire, above right, attacks Choei Tetsuhiko who is attempting a rescue of a woman in the clutches of the monster, from **LAKE OF DRACULA**. Yukiko Kobayashi, inset, as a vampiress with a predilection for doll collecting in **THE VAMPIRE GOLL**. Right, in **HORROR OF THE WOLF** the lead character, pictured far right, is a wolf capable of changing into human form.

story with a cool, taciturn detachment. Don't be fooled by what seems a conventional staging. There is plenty lurking around the bend, some of it hair-raising!

The struggle between illusion and reality, a recurring theme in the Japanese director's repertoire, is examined in the best horror films. According to David Bartholomew in *Cinefantasie*, THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES, also known as LAKE OF ORACULA and released in 1980 to American television by UFA, deals earnestly with this interplay in which a young girl, saved by an old man's intervention from an attack by a vampire, finds the event treated as a dream by her friends. Some 18 years later, Akiko, still missing the near-fatal meeting occasioned, is obsessed by a dreadful golden eye which haunts even her paintings. Eventually the experience is proven real, the woman, mortally, wishing it used to be all a dream. The dreamer has Akiko's lover, a doctor, using hypnosis to expose the vampire threat, self-defined by the physician as a "hypnotic phenomenon".

In his review of LAKE OF ORACULA, in JFF, Horacio Hagiuchi credits Yamamoto with inventing the story of the vampire with new life and focus, a statement evenly applied as well to the other pictures in the trilogy. LAKE'S common, for example, deliberately ignores the good/evil dichotomy, and sexual overtones are confusing (the vampire indifferent to both either sex). The imaginative use of mythic elements is evident in the reference to the property of non-reflection, from the sequence in which the viewer witnesses Akiko, sequestered in a closet for protection, being isolated by a blank mirror into leaving the sanctuary, only to be pounced upon by the waiting vampire.

The vampire character, appearing in the second and third film of the series, is portrayed in partly white makeup, conjuring up a Japanese folklore origin, and wearing gold color contact lenses, the vampires of THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES and THE BLOODTHIRSTY ROSE, his female counterpart in appearance. Apart from the makeup, the Yamamoto films are virtually not Japanese at all, offering instead a markedly Western influence in their approach, characters, and the characters' personal relationships.

Actor Shin Kikuda essays the vampire role, but the name Dracula is used only for the movies' international promotion. The embodiment of evil that Kikuda portrays is called Kage no Ite Oroko, or The Man Who Resembles A Shadow, an obscure reference to the elusiveness of the beast.

Elusiveness applies as well to the bloodsucker's survival in motion pictures, as was proven by Universal and Hammer. Thus the Shadow Man is offered a reprieve from an assumed demise in THE BLOODTHIRSTY EYES to insist upon his persistence three years later in THE BLOODTHIRSTY ROSE, titled EVIL OF ORACULA for sales overseas. Here, a vampire and vampireess open a girls' school to partake of the students as a source of nourishment. The fate of the antagonists is determined by a psychology professor employed at the school. He stabs a red hot poker through their hearts, laying to rest once and for all Toho's vampires and Michio Yamamoto's fantasy career.

That same year, 1974, saw the release of another convention of the horror cinema, the werewolf. In HORROR (MARK) OF THE WOLF. The film, indeed it would seem to American international motion pictures from the Fifties which were set among a society of teenagers, featured a shape shifter who was wolf first, human second. Pity the paranoid Larry Talbot who thought his lupine form was the aberration, when all along it might have been the other way around!

In Toho's movie, a hood-luck, lone-wolf disciplinary case befriends a young female instructor at his school. Threatened by violent factions at this institution, both develop a strange relationship, the teacher becoming aware of the youth's werewolf nature when he comes to her aid during a series of attacks by local goons. The boy mauls to death the gang leaders and eventually is forced to run with a pack of real wolves.

Three years later in 1977 HOUSE was released, a variation on Agatha Christie's novel And Then There Were None by Nobuhiko Obayashi. For it he donned the hats of producer and director of both the live action and the visual effects. Formerly a director of television commercials, Obayashi, in his first feature assignment, led seven young women on

a summer holiday to a mansion where the guests disappear one by one via living, devouring, home furnishings.

Many points of the production are striking, an actress with a slow, exaggerated stride, her hair and scarf blown about by a breeze which affects no one near her, mass-produced food names used as nicknames for several of the victims, the coordination of color between the costumes of the players and the definitely unnatural past-tense environment. In viewing those moments and others, Saul in Kinsey offers the possibility that HOUSE might be Obayashi's indictment of the excesses of Japanese commercialization. The director's tack is to draw attention to his cleverness, but is he kidding? Is the dialogue banal purposely like so much ad copy? Is the intrusive music performed by the pop rock group Godego calculated or accidental? Obayashi's debut is a puzzling one, to which Bill adds: "Obayashi is either a brilliant conscious satirist or a delusional unconscious satirist."

Discussion of Toho's horror, and fantasy would not be complete without inclusion of the murder mystery thriller, a type of film, introduced in 1976, which received an enthusiastic response from the Japanese movie-going public. The movies generally featured murders in the present occurring in settings of suggested supernatural evil linked with the past, with the real murderer and a proper explanation for the bizarre proceedings disclosed in the final act. Several studios toyed with the formula after Toho's initial effort turned into gold at the box office, but Toho by far produced the largest number of films. By 1980, however, the love affair with these titillating works would turn cold.

The film behind all the furor was THE INUGAMI'S, director Ken Ichikawa's stylish retelling of strange murders based on the best-selling novel by the famous Japanese mystery author Saeji Yokomura, whose many works were selected to follow the successful lead of THE INUGAMI'S intent to continue this propitious arrangement, director Ichikawa was teamed with the writings of Yokomura for four additional productions: ISLAND OF TERROR and DEATH'S NURSERY SONG, both from 1977, QUEEN BEE in 1978, and HOUSE OF HANGING in 1979. Yokomura's stories narrated the exploits of a dandyish hidden detective garbed in gear from Lepi's past, an intended rumpiled appearance of the eccentric, not unlike Peter Falk's fabulous Columbo character.

Director Susumu Kuwada in THE COLL HOUSE, released in 1979, approximates the popular Ichikawa/Yokomura efforts in style and content. A 300 year vendetta acts as a background to a tale in which a doll, possibly motivated by a curse, may be the actual murderer.

Not unlike the preceding mystery titles, a masquerade plays an important role in Toho's 1979 film HAUNTED GOLD in which criminals, to keep intruders from locating their buried gold, create the deception that the swamp in which the booty is stashed is haunted by a female ghost. It requires samurai detective Itami Hanzo, played by Katsu Shirogane of Zatoichi fame, to foil the gambit.

The invasion by an alien life form of the body of an industrial spy, right, played by Kemp Schara in YOG—MONSTER FROM SPACE, forces fun to set a fire in a cave to kill off the bats inhabiting it, for their high pitched squeal strangely affects the giant monsters also controlled by the space life. Effect achieved by cel animation.

monster monnaie

A menace is a pain in the butt, a nuisance, and it can be a threat to the survival of its own kind. The latter precisely describes most of the decade's creature features, especially the first, SPACE AMOEBAS, which inaugurated the Seventies and was issued under an atmosphere of peace, love, and rock 'n' roll, an era admonishing social responsibility and of films which reflected this attitude. YOG—MONSTER FROM SPACE, as the film was issued in the U.S., was an anachronism to a time 25 years gone in its tale of space spores attached to a space ship returning to Earth and the giant monsters generated from the infestation of a turtle, a crab, and a squid by the hitchhikers.

An industrial spy, also inhabited by the spores, acts in concert with the giants/aliens to make easy their access to world domination. After wiping out some island's beach front property, terrorizing the locals, and engaging in the ritualistic monster versus monster combat, the creatures, and thus the space threat, meet their end when a volcano freshes off the last of the beasts as well as the spy, who realizes the damage his schizophrenia has caused and has jumped into the fiery bowels of Earth.

YOG's visual effects were under the command of Sadamasa Arikawa, debuting as replacement for the late Eiji Kuburaya. His past credited effects assignments included co-director with Eiji on such productions as SON OF GOZILLA, OCEANOGRAPHY ALL MONSTERS, and GOZILLA'S REVENGE. Following YOG, Arikawa departed to freelance (e.g., the 1979 Taiwanese production, THE PHOENIX, for Eastern Media, see JFF # 12). The unevenness of the visuals in YOG may have hastened his leaving.

The design of the film's monsters has them dissimilar to the smaller animal life from which they were to have evolved, while the intent to disguise humans as beasts proves laughable here, especially the thrashing limbs not occupied by a human arm or leg. Optical effects, however, are a plus. Matte lines are rarely in evidence and density fluctuations between matted elements are just as scarce. Nicely done are the superimposed animation sequences of the great squid's tentacle which, having wrapped itself around a naive of the island, lifts him skyward, of a spear bouncing off a half-bent for leather monster, of a bat swarm, though close-up mixtures of the weirded warriors are unrealistic.

Relevancy in Toho's fantasy titles has played an important, if fluctuating, role. Not all films, YOG an example, have examined the splitting of the atom and its abuse, pollution, bureaucracy, and so on. The several Toho pictures which



Photo © 1979 Toho International Co., Ltd.

Three giant beasts which were a normal size turtle, crab, and nautilus und overtaken by space spores in YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE, a 1970 film.



have as stronger dramas for it: GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA, a such an endeavor.

Hedora, a tadpole-like thing reared in the industrial waste choking a river in Japan, transmogrifies into a giant,avenous, living pile of filth feeding off the wastes it locates everywhere. Civilization's helplessness is averted by the timely arrival of Godzilla who, assisted by a scientific device using electricity to dehydrate the pest, sends Hedora to smog monster heaven.

While GOOZILLA VS. THE THING only hinted at it, threats to the eco-system are showcased in 1971's GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA, retitled GOOZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER by American International for the U.S. The movie takes dead and its subject seriously, a kind of ecological CHINA SYN-DROME with Godzilla as Jane Fonda. The film presents its case via effective intercutting of the main storyline with pollution footage (smoke-belching factories, waste jammed harbors) and satiric editorial cartoon comments.

The weakest element of GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA, slickly directed by Yoshimatsu Banno, is a youngster as one of the leads, at the time a device used with alarming regularity in Japanese fantasy product. The fact that a child has such a large role is not the dilemma, but the kind of precocious child he is. The young lad, son of a scientist and who is also scientifically inclined, wiles away his time as a Godzilla inspired never-never land, confident the giant will assist the world in its predicament. Of course, it comes to be, and in the finale the boy, who has cheered Godzilla from afar, waves bye-bye to the receding reptile, not unlike the type in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS who beholds the extraterrestrials.

Toho's child is a hyperactive, whiney-voiced, imposition Spielberg's youth is a quiet, aqueous, endearing character. All of Toho's children, in the forefront of the action or not, are similar to Ken in HEDORA and are not very likable.

Tsuyoshi Nakano, in his first assignment as effects director, has achieved a caliber of output associated with Eiji Tsuburaya, although miniature work on the Mt. Fuji set, where the final monster confrontation occurs, is devoid of vegetation and detailed geological formation. The barrenness draws the eye to it and detracts from believability. Composer Rieko Miyabe's fine score occasionally lightens the tension of the film with a student, squawk-like fadure for Godzilla which suggests a waddling duck is the hero. The reputation of the theme becomes imitating.

Godzilla treats the audience to a new aspect of his powers heretofore undiscovered, in any previous entry. He first Crouching into a ball and directing his radioactive breath outward, the monster becomes a reptilian version of the English Homer jet. The capability adds a new dimension to the character as it enables Godzilla to outwit Hedora, but the endowment is more amusing than awesome, to see this hulking pick itself up and cruise.

HEDORA features many sequences transpiring at night, adding to the gloom and doom of the unsettling images. The gaudy day glio colors and effects in the four Godzilla titles to come create the atmosphere of a carnival, appropo to their approximation of a midway funhouse ride. GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA is a fluke of the Seventies.

GOOZILLA VS. GIGAN, which followed in 1971, was picked up in the U.S. as GOOZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND by

Cinema Shares International. The firm also purchased for distribution the two succeeding Godzilla releases, GOOZILLA VS. MEGALON, produced in 1973, and, from 1974, GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA.

In GOOZILLA VS. GIGAN a woman fears for the safety of her brother, a computer whiz kidnapped by invaders from Space M in the Hunter Nebula. She and two men are thrown together in an attempt to deconstruct the aliens who occupy the bodies of recently deceased humans and who are planning an invasion of Earth from their base in Godzilla Tower, an enormous structure shaped like the monster and situated amid an amusement park. Godzilla and Angkor are suckered off Monster Island by the aliens who play a recording of a particular signal to draw the monsters to the park, allowing the invaders to set up a kill of the beasts at close range. King Ghidorah and Gigan are likewise summoned, but from space, to help lead the two friendly monsters to their doom. When one of the heroes blows up the tower and the aliens, gone is the controlling tape, releasing Godzilla and Angkor to defeat the two space crocodiles.

Japanese genre films generally provide backgrounds on their alien attackers, and GIGAN is no exception. The audience is whisked away on a voyage to the aggressors' planet Earth look-alike home which is populated by a humanoid species shown driving Japanese automobiles. This race polluted its world to the point of killing off its own kind. However, the invaders of GIGAN are a mutated species from the planet which survived to migrate to Earth and there set up shop in the bodies of deceased Terriers. When asked to divulge just what kind of beings they are, a light is thrown on one of the pseudo-humans, and on the wall is cast the shadow of a huge cockroach.

No longer the aeronaut, Godzilla vocalizes in GIGAN, so too Angkor, in guttural intonations, distorted to a point of near-unintelligibility by synthesizer. It would have been better if no monster speak was uttered at all. After GIGAN, there wouldn't be.

In a money-saving measure, footage from WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS was incorporated into GIGAN of the master cannon fire which is to seemingly repel an Angkor attack, the first monster skirmish some 40 minutes into the film. Gargantuan destruction footage from GHORAH appears when the King is loosed upon Earth.

GIGAN's cat and mouse game played between heroes and villains, a 90 minute serial of captures and escapes, was directed and co-scripted by Jun Fukuda, who has single-handedly been responsible for more mortally wounding the monster film genre on several occasions. He would carry the same credits into the production of GOOZILLA VS. MEGALON which retained the name through its American release.

A review of past-published criticism surprisingly indicates that MEGALON struck a favorable chord with reviewers. Even the wail Vincent Canby of the New York Times appears to have been simian with the movie. In his critique he notes Godzilla's transformation from villain to savior. "The dragon has become St. George!"

Gigan returns to assist the insect-like Megalon who is



protector of the lost race of Setopos, an ancient civilization below the surface, in *GOOZILLA VS. MEGALON*. Under ground nuclear testing is rocking the very foundation of the city, so it sends the beetle to make war on the surface people. A robot, jet jaguar, stolen by agents from below, grows to enormous size but turns instead to fight alongside Godzilla whom he has summoned from Monster Island. The four-way earthshaking battle levels countryside and city, but Godzilla and the robot are victorious. Godzilla heads back home, and jet jaguar reverts to normal size and returns to his human creators.

Bird-like Gigan, a mixture of flesh and machine who appears in both *GIGAN* and *MEGALON*, has stubby bat wings, a built-in opaque windshield for eyes, two useless claws, and a Black & Decker circular saw running from chest to abdomen. And Gigan can fire a lethal stream of energy from a point centered on its forehead. Megalon, in its only feature, is a huge, flying insect with power drills in place of hands, and is capable of shooting various rays from a mandible encased mouth and mace like antenna. Jet jaguar, also from *MEGALON*, is a nifty flying robot resembling Ultra Seven from the Tsuburaya television series. Deceased in a grey latex suit immersed in red, blue, and yellow, the automaton, normally standing the average human height, can balloon to the skyscraper scale of any monster in sight. No matter how nifty the robot is, it and the other new creatures are pure nonsense. For good or bad that is the direction the Godzilla films were being led, and the char actors fit the niche.

Special effects director Tsuyoshi Nakano, involved with *GIGAN*, *MEGALON*, and the final Godzilla titles, is at his best when required to deliver cartoon animated rays and force fields and spectacular pyrotechnics. With few exceptions, he's at his worst when asked to produce miniatures, latex creatures, and visual effects photography. This area of weakness, unfortunately, is the heart of the product. After Nakano's fine start with *GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA*, his out put turns erratic and is generally a detrimental aspect to these films.

There also is a problem with all the new faces presently displayed in the monster films of the Seventies. Unlike the Toho entities in the Fifties and Sixties, the third decade sets a new policy of casting different unknowns, unknown at least to the genre, in each new production, though occasionally Toho would break the pattern by using actor Akihiko Hirata in two key roles in *GOOZILLA VS. MEGACHOOZILLA* and *TERROR OF MEGACHOOZILLA* and Akira Kubo, Yoshio Yuchiya, and Kenji Sahara in *YOG*. The new personnel, however, appear lacking in the depth of their acting ability, amaze us, if you will. But the blame may be shared with the scripts for seldom is the viewer allowed to explore the characters on the screen, since the players deliver little except to expound plot action and court disaster.

The final two Godzilla entities carry a remarkable machine monster called Mechagodzilla. It is a metallic twin of the superstar from Monster Island, a veritable tank on two legs, with the capability of flight and of discharging rockets from its fingers and lethal rays from its evil red eyes. Spinning its head at incredible revolutions per minute, Mechagodzilla

is able to whip up an impenetrable protective force field.

Constructed of Space Titanium, the dynamic machine, in his first film outing, *GOOZILLA VS. MEGACHOOZILLA*, is under the control of space invaders and has been programmed to become a Godzilla double in the film's initial sequences. Its destructive ferocity is displayed with a design toward disgracing the good image of the flesh and blood version. The robot malfunctions in a match with the real Godzilla, and its exterior abruptly transforms from a scaly hide to one of glistering metal before seeking refuge in an Okinawan cave, secret base of the aliens. Mechagodzilla is serviced with the aid of a kidnapped professor portrayed by Akihiko Hirata, the only recognizable talent of the cast and creator of the oxygen destroyer in *GOIRA*, and off the robot goes in search of his quarry. Meanwhile, an Okinawan legend, prophesying the return of a lion monster when the island's residents are beset by danger, is fulfilled by the emergence of King Sesar who joins Godzilla in battle and in victory as a team. The aliens are routed and revealed to be ape creatures beneath a human exterior.

King Sesar is no lion monster and falls far short of the picture painted by the legend; it is more a refugee from a Japanese superhero TV series and less a lion because of its bat face and poodle hair cut. Sesar is an amphibious driven scrounger in combat, and its antics remind one of Bert Lahr's exorbitant lion in the *WIZARD OF OZ*.

Titled for U.S. release initially as *GOOZILLA VS. DINIC MONSTER*, the film became *GOOZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER*, possibly a result of pressure from the producers of 6 MILLION DOLLAR MAN who claimed copyright infringement of the word *biocer*. The film contained footage swept from *HEDORA* and *SUBMERISION OF JAPAN*.

The 1975 production *TERROR OF MEGACHOOZILLA*, a sequel of sorts to the 1974 picture, brings with it a class absent from the other Seventies Toho Godzilla films with the possible exception of *GOOZILLA VS. HEDORA*. Director Ishiro Honda's return, he who molded the genre, positively affects a change. *TERROR* returns character complexity and production polish in spite of the clucked trappings of the story. Monster photography often is shot at ground level, and actors have things to do to develop their persona. Praise can be heaped too high, but considering the quality of monster material leveled at the viewer since the beginning of the Seventies, *TERROR* is a faint light in an otherwise dull ray light.

Akihiko Hirata, once again an eminent man of science, appears as the aged Dr. Malune, a man once summoned by academic society due to a proclamation in which he admitted the possibility of controlling a beast he discovered in the sea. Presently assumed deceased, the doctor lives a secluded life with his daughter and has completed work on a means to control the monster which has been named



Above left, the flying stage of monster Hedora; and above, the first time audiences learn Godzilla is capable of flight, from *GOOZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER*. Bottom, left to right: *GOOZILLA VS. GIGAN*, also starring Angilas and Ghidrah; *GOOZILLA VS. MEGALON*, also featuring robot Jet Jaguar and a return of Gigan; *GOOZILLA VS. MEGACHOOZILLA*, including King Sesar and a brief Angilas appearance; *TERROR OF MEGACHOOZILLA*, also employing Titanosaur.

Titanosaur. Malune is assisted by aliens from the Third Planet in the Black Hole of Space who use the device also to resurrect Mechagodzilla. Malune's daughter, led in her effort to destroy the device because of its misuse, is miraculously reconstructed as a cyborg by the aliens who have installed the control unit in her body. Another control mechanism fabricated by the film's heroes is able to intercept the invaders' message and substitute its own signal and thus stop Titanosaur. Godzilla, ever the good guy, takes on Mechagodzilla—and wins. Malune, his daughter, and the outer space infiltrators are destroyed by an intergal agent.

Titanosaur, an interesting prehistoric-styled behemoth, is never allowed to unleash its strength, if indeed it has much. A mere pushover for the Japanese technologists, the creature is a useless facet of the screenplay.

Though the monster wars in *TERROR OF MEGACHOOZILLA* are familiar, the film fortunately co-stars a sympathetic character in Dr. Malune, whose decay is presented through an effective succession of dramatic stills. The reanimation of his daughter creates even more headaches for the doctor, and she too acquires a depth due to her inability to clear up her inner conflicts.

Issued to U.S. theatres as *TERROR OF GOOZILLA* and to American television retitled *TERROR OF MEGACHOOZILLA*, the picture was a return to the past, albeit not a perfect one, and delivered hope for the next in the series—which was not to be.



flights of fancy

This chapter begins with one of the best genre films ever to be developed by Toho: SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN. It could be categorized as a disaster film, for it indeed is that, though its release antedated that class of U.S. film, but it is much more. The picture is "one of the genuine epics of science fiction," to quote Bill Warren from his review in *Cinefantastique*. The film so impressed the Japanese that a SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN television series was spawned by TBS.

Based on the extremely popular Seiya Komatsu novel, the 1973 film, running almost 2½ hours, slowly weaves a dramatic tale of an impending natural cataclysm as viewed by a number of players literally and figuratively imprisoned by it—a step by step presentation of ever worsening events, explained by scientific fact in the picture, which eventually leads to the sinking of the archipelago known as Japan. It almost seems that the nation itself is the real star, for SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN offers an incisive look at aspects of national personality which the Japanese value the most, and the sum is the people's love for their island nation. That their country should cease to exist would be the ultimate tragedy.

For TIDAL WAVE, the American version of the picture, Roger Corman's New World castized over an hour's worth of the central characters' reactions to the developments leading to the doom of Japan. What remains is only a disaster film—a poor man's EARTHQUAKE—in ineptly dubbed glimpse of people in panic amid Tetsuro Tanba's sequences of destruction effects which, though daring in concept, are not that accomplished—not what the film is about, at all.

The bastardized print includes newly-filmed English language footage which does not match the material surrounding it and acts as a sort of buffer zone to deaden the mounting tension. The American scenes star Lorne Greene as a U.S. ambassador whose help is sought to relocate the people of Japan before the island sinks beneath the waves. The logistics and obstacles of resettlement take on a new light when considering the problems faced by the refugees

migrating to American shores from the Caribbean and Southeast Asia.

New World's ad campaign for print and broadcast media prominently features both the aquatic phenomenon of its new title and Mr. Greene, but Greene's screen time is brief, as is the tidal wave's, of which the latter is only one of several calamities tearing apart Japan. Is it any wonder that American audiences hold little regard for films from the Orient?

A second Komatsu novel, *Esper*, forms the basis of ESPY, a 1974 sci-fi action thriller filled with colorful villains and heroes, the latter possessors of extra-sensory powers and who are members of ESPY, an Interpol like outfit peopled with agents of various supra-normal abilities. Their powerful enemy is Counter ESPY, another group of paranormalists, but these are fanatics bent on global domination through kidnap and assassination of world leaders.

ESPY is fantastic fiction, unlike SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN's scientifically convincing drama. Effects sequences, as witnessed by Mizu, in *Variety*, are "spectacular," especially

"in a surreal incident over Alaska and an earthquake scene," the earthquake sequence revealed by the heroes, victorious in the end, obviously, to be a hallucination suggested by the leader of the revolutionaries.

A book by Ben Goto which details the prophecies of Nostradamus becoming actualities is the foundation for Toho's 1974 big budget successor to SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN. The movie is CATASTROPHE 1999, released to American television in 1981 by UFA as THE FINAL DAYS OF PLANET EARTH. It examines the events which could spell the death of the Earth, presenting a near-future plagued by all manner of pollution, of catastrophes the pollution precipitates, and of the occasionally incredible effects the changes play upon a civilization becoming anachronistic.

A scientist, realized by actor Tetsuro Tanba, who also essayed the role of the Japanese Prime Minister in SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN, constantly warns the nation's top leaders to take heed of environmental trends. They might think him a bit too fanatical in his position, but they are



SUBMERSSION OF JAPAN: A city in flame; Hiroshi Fujiko and Ayumi Ishide, inset, two of the performers.

An environment gone berserk in CATASTROPHE 1999. Tetsuro Tanba, left, centered below large bat, plays a scientist who warns of the effects of pollution.



just as worried about having to tell the populace the path down which the country is headed, for the politicians have contributed to the eroding eco-system in their politically expedient decision making. With a part-electronic score composed by Isao Tomita, the melodrama climaxes with a flash-forward which lets the viewer survey a possible future world invaded by a humankind reduced to degenerate acromegalic mutants.

With nature the antagonist in Toho's earlier film, beginning with tectonic movement, *CATASTROPHE* 1999 makes man's corruption of the environment the causality, forcing man in his increasing madness to survive by means of violence. Just as Toho's *THE LAST WAR* from 1961 was a warning to cease belligerent threats backed by nuclear arsenals, never more appropo than today, so is this film a warning, one of unavoidable disaster unless people work together to cease the fouling. The plea is warranted and just, but the picture fails to inject a compelling human drama which could have made the impact that much more agonizingly real.

Mystery and intrigue in feudal Japan is an area often sought for documentation in that country's films. The 1974 movie *DEVILN SPIES* takes that as its background to unravel the exploits of five demons raised by demon parents in hidden recesses of the Japanese mountains. The Force Five become members of the Shogunate's entourage to quell a plot to overthrow him, but when their task is completed, only two remain in support of their lord.

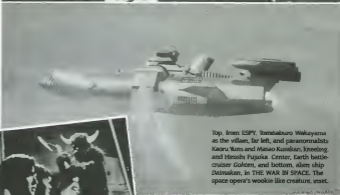
Toho's \$2 million entry into the box office war set off by the U.S. success of *STAR WARS* was rushed into completion to premiere in Japan before George Lucas' film opened there. That *THE WAR IN SPACE*, issued in 1977, was to emulate *SW*'s blend of entertainment, action, and spectacle was a point conceded by Tomoyuki Tanaka, executive producer at Toho. He argued the changing nature of Japanese movie making with emphasis placed on large-scale effects moves, hopefully co-financed with foreign dollars. An example in 1977 was the announced Toho/Hammer/Euan Lloyd co-production of *NESSE*, a picture about the Loch Ness monster, for which Toho would shoot the effects at its studio near Tokyo. What Tanaka and his firm failed to realize about *STAR WARS* which excited moviegoers everywhere were the 1977 suite of the-art visuals, competent thespian talents, a rousing score, impressive live-action photography, and set design, and a clever, fast-paced script filled with memorable characters. Toho's picture had none of this.

If plagiarism is at the heart of the matter, at least do it well and preferably better than the original from which it would be fashioned. Yet, *THE WAR IN SPACE* looks like an old Toho of picture with Japanese 1954 state-of-the-art effects, mediocre acting and score, unconvincing sets and a story right out of *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE*. Whichever is interesting is that *WAKURUSEI DAINISKO*, the 1977 film's Japanese title, can be translated the same as that for the 1959 film.

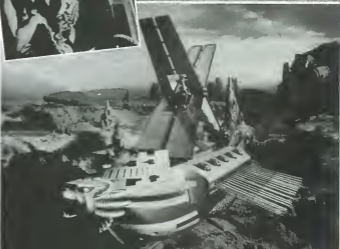
THE WAR IN SPACE concerns an attack on Earth to gain a much needed energy source by green aliens based on Venus. The Earthlings, having just put the finishing touches on a super rocket, tangle with the invaders and their battle cruiser in a space war near Venus. The speed and strength of the Earth ship turns the tide in favor of the Terrans. Fortunately, Lucas had the foresight to set his stage "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away."

The Earthcraft Gohken of the film appears suspiciously like a cross between *Atoragon* and *LATITUDE ZERO*'s Alpha and can in fact burrow through rock because of its prow positioned drill. The evil Damokan is a refurbished 17th Century Portuguese galleon equipped with X-shaped solar cells, a Chinese dragon figurehead, and a series of anachronistic row-like appendages which power the ship through the ether. Hardware has always been a staple of Toho's genre films, and they were generally criticised because of it. It took *STAR WARS* to make it legitimate, at the same time rendering Japanese model construction and photo-graphy obsolete.

THE WAR IN SPACE failed to match Tanaka's expectations; Japanese audiences stayed away in droves. *NESSE* was shelved. So much for Tomoyuki Tanaka's prediction on the changing nature of Japanese motion pictures. The space opera was eventually picked up for distribution to American television in 1981 where it became evident that Toho resorted to cannibalizing destruction footage from its *SUB-*



Top, Iron ESF, Yamashiro Wakayama as the villain, far left, and paragonists Kikuo Kato and Masao Kusaka, kneeling, and Hiroshi Fujioka. Center, Earth battle-cruiser Gohken, and bottom, alien ship Damokan, in *THE WAR IN SPACE*. The space opera's wookiee-like creature, inset.





Photos © 1993 Toho International Co., Ltd.

VERSION OF JAPAN AND CATASTROPHE: 1999 to speed up the film's release in Japan.

'97's BLOOD TYPE: BLUE, titled in pre-release as UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS, details an investigation by a NHK reporter, portrayed by the excellent actor Tetsuya Nakada, which leads to the discovery that the blood of certain individuals has become blue in color. A possible explanation between exposure to UFO's and the transformation is proffered, but government paranoia and human suspicion inhibit temperate investigation. Official discrimination against those with the abnormal blood soon has sway over the populace. The heavy-handed delivery of the allegory makes the film's long 137 minute running time appear much, much longer.

HINOTORI: Toho's 1978 production entitled THE PHOENIX in most promotional copy, is director Ken Ishikawa's sendup of every samurai film ever released, here spaced with strip pets of cartoon animation (directed by sf author and illustrator Osamu Tezuka), slow motion, stop action, and miniature effects in the form of a volcano and an earthquake. The message of HINOTORI, that being mortal one should live life to the fullest, is the simple lesson of Tezuka's tale which symbolizes humanity's origin, not just Japanese history.

The immortality of the title's character is the running device Osamu Tezuka used to envision his eight volume

HINOTORI: left & right, a 1977 film based on volume one of Osamu Tezuka's eight volume comic linked by the Phoenix. Center: Tezuka art from his book.

comic series he began in 1954 to represent the history of the human race as observed by the mystical bird. Each volume is a complete story situated in different eras of the past, present, and future. HINOTORI depicts volume one.

Ultimately, the focus of the picture is upon the mythic phoenix and two warring clans' attempt to capture the bird to drink its eternal life-giving blood. What detracts from the struggle is the phoenix itself which, as indicated by Herb in Variety, in animation "emerges as a combo Woody Woodpecker-Big Bird." Though killed at the climax, the Fire Bird is consumed in flame, enabling another to emerge and soar into the sky.

Faring poorly in its Japanese release, the film's problem is its insistence on remaining faithful to the original story's comic book format by using outlandish makeup on the actors to recreate the comic art characters. Too, the excessive people/animal carnage, decapitation of an entire

platoon of horses, for example, dulls the senses early in a screening of the movie. "Even with this comic book approach, the tale is too unwieldy to succeed because of its length," Herb continues. "Any severe cutting would make the story incomprehensible." As a Saturday matinee serial, HINOTORI could run for months! Rumor has it that director Ishikawa offered his apology for the film to Tezuka even before it was released, though Tezuka himself has to share some of the blame for his cartoony animation, including a guest appearance by his Mighty Atom.

The sweeping popularity in the Seventies of animation in Japanese television and features found an indifference at Toho. The studio continued to ply its trade in the live-action medium, leaving a larger share of the audience with each new release from Toei Doga, Academy Ltd., and other emerging cartoon outfits. Animation enabled its producers to be as wild and creative as their imaginations would let them. The process lent itself to the extraordinary. And animation was cheaper. Toho eventually would take notice of the phenomenon, but not until the Eighties. Could the success of the early Toho sf, fantasy, and horror pictures be revived? Maybe through animation the opportunity would be offered. ■

TOHO FILMOGRAPHY ADDENDA

The borderline fantasy HURRY! KURAMA!, from 1956, about a priest who uses hypnotism to make his enemies powerless, ONI, another 1956 production and borderline fantasy horror film in which a man sees an unearthly light flickering over the corpse of a dead husband and wife. A fantasy tale about a super strong person, an KNOCKOUT GLOPS, a 1967 picture directed by Motoyoshi Oda (UNVISIBLE AVENGER, GIGANTIS), 1975's SECRET SCROLLS, set in feudal Japan with each portion of feature length and directed by Hiroshi

Inagaki (THE THIRTEEN TREASURES, THE YOUTH AND HIS AMULET). Director Kazuo Saeki's (SHIMATSU TRAVELS WITH GHOSTS, MY FRIEND DEATH) 1958 color fairy tale THE BADGER PALACE, concerning badgers who save a princess from an evil spider queen, A woman who blasts villains with a weapon concealed behind her eye patch in THE AGE OF ASSASSINS, a fantasy comedy directed by Kinoshita Keizoro (BLOOD TYPE: BLUE, THE SPOOK COTTAGE), from 1967, THE KILLING BOTTLE, a 1967 sf spy film starring Nick Adams which introduces a new weapon to espionage, a bottled substance whose release enables it to expand thousands of times, subverting its victims, From 1968, KUSO TENGOKU (Jems,

EVANCY PARADISE), a nonsense sf comedy directed by Ken Matsumori, in which a gentle frog like alien, gifted with telepathic and time altering powers, comes from planet Kabara to Earth to have fun. Released Dec. 20, 1969, and double billed with GOGZILLA'S REVENGE in Japan, KOTO GO-GO GO UOHU DAIKORIN (trans., GREAT SPACE ADVENTURE), director Jun Fukuda's sf comedy starring the comedy team Komo Gogo Co., rivals of the Crazy Cats, and featuring the rockspout from INVASION OF ASTRO MONSTER, most likely in stock footage. Announced in 1969, but never filmed, STAR OF ADAM, JOTOWO TO ONNA NO SHIMA), a science fiction movie about the sue wivors of WWII who travel to another world, to have been directed by Hideki Omori.



Above, Gamers from Kabara. Comedy troupe Kumo Gogo-Go, right.



the toho legacy

Photos © 1993 Toho International Co., Ltd.

THE LAST WAR

**A Statement By M. Shimizu,
President, Toho Co., Ltd.***

The time has come for us to make this picture...
Newspapers, radio commentators, scholars, common men—all speak of a dread hovering ominously over the entire world every second of every day. If—we repeat—if this dread should descend upon us, it will result in the destruction of mankind and, perhaps, life itself.

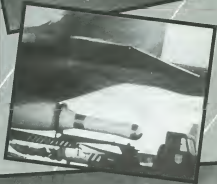
Men of intelligence are taking great pains to avert it. This is indeed commendable; there can never be too much effort exercised toward this end. But still we live in fear that a great war, the Last War, may come.

We, the Japanese, are in a better position than people of any other nation to make a film such as this. We side with no one; we are inimical to no one. THE LAST WAR is presented as our appeal to the world.

We of the Toho Company are employing every vestige of our technical skill to represent as realistically and appealingly as possible exactly what will happen if this colossal horror befalls us.

It is our sincere hope that by producing and exhibiting this film we can serve the cause of peace.

* Limited apocryphal version of THE LAST WAR is 1961.





ALTERNATE FUTURES FROM

TOWA

From distributor Toho-Towa emerged two imaginative animation films leading viewers into worlds unknown.

The appeal of the future lies with our hopes for a better tomorrow and the possibilities of the effect technology will impose upon that tomorrow. That's news? Not really. The news, old hat to Japanese animation devotees, is the outpouring of animated films and television series by the film studios in Japan, both majors and independents alike, which deal with those possibilities as viewed with the studios' unbridled passion for fantasy. Toho-Towa, a leading film distributor in Japan for the independents, has released two very successful independently-produced animated features which take a fantastic look at what lies down the road.

SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA

Based on a popular manga by Busshi Terawawa which was serialized in Shonen Jump, COBRA is a wild sci-fi comedy/adventure released July 3, 1982 and billed as being in 3-D, though the 3-D effects are nothing more than

bits of computer animation. The picture succeeds an animated television series with the same marker, both film and series a product of the Tokyo Movie Shinsha animation facilities. Surprisingly, all three—the manga, the movie, and the series—display typical American stereotyping in their use of a handsome hero who is rough,

SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA/Featured players from the 1982 animated motion picture are shown left, beginning at top: Lady, Cobra's armoroid (armored android) partner; the lusty, space pirate Cobra and his psychic energy weapon, the "Psycho-Gun," is attached to his left arm; June, a bounty hunter after Cobra's hide, but only for his help in preventing a takeover of the universe by the evil Crystal Boy.

tough, and a womanizer, and the voluptuous, under-dressed females he meets.

Cobra, a space pirate by trade, is best described in his own words: "I would only think of living in a world full of danger . . . Guess 'tis my nature. Hell, hopeless fools like me can be cured only by passing away . . ." With this philosophical bent, the lusty rogue faces the battlefields of space with bad temper and cynicism.

Actually, at the beginning of COBRA, the hero, unaware of his true identity as the space pirate, is a down-and-out nebbish named Johnson. Cobra, thought killed in a bomb blast, had from his antagonists by having his memory erased and face altered, taking on the new identity, yet still grafted to his left arm is a powerful psychic energy weapon called the "Psycho Gun." Johnson's adventures resurrects the remembrance of his previous incarnations, and aided by Jane, a bounty hunter, Lady, Cobra's armored (armored android) partner, and Turtle, his hi-tech spaceship, Cobra takes on Guld, the evil overlord who threatens to conquer the universe, and his master, Crystal Boy, a cyborg who plans to send the star Minus into our sun with the ultimate goal of destroying the solar system.

What Jane wants from Cobra is not his head for the reward, but his help in saving the solar system, the first step in this goal being to find her triplet sisters Catherine and Dominique. When Jane is killed in a battle her spirit is transferred into Catherine, and she and Cobra fly to Minus where Crystal Boy, his men, and Dominique, on Crystal Boy's side, lay in ambush for them.

Buichi Terasawa's original story was co-adapted by Haruyama Yamazaki who previously penned for the screen STAR OF THE GIANTS, a baseball tale, and LUPIN THE THIRD—CAGLIOSTRO'S CASTLE.

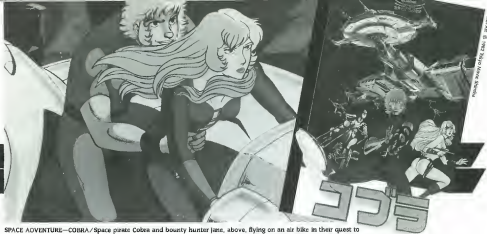
Author Terasawa contributed to teenage-girl magazines early in his career and later, under the guidance of Osamu Iizuka, began "Cobra" in Shonen Jump in 1978.

COBRA's director, Osamu Dezaki, started in the film business directing episodes of ASTRO BOY and the live action TV show BIG X. His theatrically-released animation directorial efforts include the boxing film TOMORROW'S JOE and its sequel.

Animation director for COBRA, Akio Sugino has worked on several television series including LEO THE WHITE LION and directed as his first animated film SANU TO ICHI TORI MONCHIKAE. He teamed with director Dezaki on ESU WO NDRAE and TOMORROW'S JOE II.

HARMAGEDDON: The wrecking (energy) ball of the Evil Entity and its destructive capabilities are shown above left, a result of the Evil Entity's bid to take over the Earth. In the final sequence of the picture, above right, all of the Palatin Warriors concentrate on focusing their minds in their attempt to thwart that plan. Left, promotional art from the 1983 animated motion picture.





SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA/Space pirate Cobra and bounty hunter Jene, above, flying on an air bike in their quest to prevent the star Minus from being sent into our sun by King Gemma. Poster art, above right, for Tokyo Movie Shinsha's film.

HARMAGEDDON

The manga "Gemma Taisen" ("War Against Evil" or "Armageddon"), a collaboration between author Kamumasa Hirai and artist Shotaro Ishimori, is the foundation for the animated film HARMAGEDDON, distributed in Japan by Toho Iwowa. "Gemma Taisen," first published in Shonen Magazine and thought impossible to translate to film due to the complexity of the beast, the beast in this case being the 18-volume, still-in-progress saga by Hirai and Ishitani, in the hands of producer Haruki Kadokawa (VIRUS) became Kadokawa Films' first cartoon feature. Having premiered March 12, 1983, HARMAGEDDON echoes the James Bond approach of COBRA as its animated version of "What if

En route to the United States on a mission of goodwill, Princess Luna, the first queen of Transylvania, is hurt in a plane crash and suddenly finds herself projected to a galaxy 3,800,000 light-years away. There she hears the voice of Floy, Keeper of the Cosmic Energy. "The lethal hand of King Gemma [Evil Entity] the Destructor stretches over the universe!" She teams with Vega, a cyborg warrior sent by Floy to gather companions on Earth who are endowed with superpowers. Meanwhile in Japan, young Jo Azuma suddenly feels inside him a mysterious power beyond his comprehension. As this and other telepathic messages being sent all over Earth by Princess Luna reach more receptors, including a black youth named Sonny, the Evil Entity unleashes a deluge which submerges New York city, turns Tokyo into a desert, and reactivates the once-dormant Mt. Fuji. In retribution, the superpowered Psychic Warriors join forces against King Gemma.

"Gemma Taisen," apparently based on the "Book of Revelations," details the escalation of the corruption of our civilization as personified by the Evil Entity. Jo Azuma is the counterforce—it is a battle between Light and Darkness. In between the antagonists the Earth remains the setting for Armageddon.

The Evil Entity materializes in human form to tempt the flesh and spirit. Spiritual values are then, completely subjugated by materialistic interests, and Masokind wanders without direction. This anxious feeling is the driving force which stimulated Kazumasa Hirai to write "Gemma Taisen." His message is that love, kindness, and mercy are qualities to be found not in the materialistic world, but in the heart. Jo Azuma notices this in passages in the series, but then Azuma is Hirai's alter ego. His comment to this message can be measured in Hirai's own thoughts: "I don't care whoever writes or publishes it, provided it's written and published somehow."

Hirai also has written other material for comics including the serial "Wolf Guy" which began in 1967 and which like "Gemma Taisen" is still being produced. His collaborator,

Shotaro Ishimori, has had a remarkable career in his own right in publications, but appears to have found his niche in live-action and animated films and TV shows as author/creator/supervisor on such productions as CYBORG 009—LEGEND OF SUPER GALAXY and the MASKED RIDER television series.

HARMAGEDDON director Taro Riu has had a successful career in television and the cinema as well, directing episodes of the animated series ASTRO BOY and LEO THE WHITE LION and many features including CAPTAIN HARLOCK, GALAXY EXPRESS 999 and its sequel.

Takemura Makoto, art director for HARMAGEDDON, designed backgrounds for ASTRO BOY and acted as art director for MARCO, both GALAXY EXPRESS 999 pictures, and the CAPTAIN HARLOCK film, among others.

Animation director for Kadokawa's film, Tetsuo Noda worked on TV's GETTER ROBOT G, GAiking, and the features CAPTAIN FUTURE and SWAN LAKE. He also produced layouts for ADIEU GALAXY EXPRESS 999.

Yoshitani Kanada, credited for special animation on HARMAGEDDON, worked on the series GAKING, ZAMBOT 3, and GAIDAN 3, and the motion pictures TOWARD THE TERRA, both GALAXY EXPRESS 999 films, and CYBORG 009. Kanada also created the opening title sequences for TV's GALAXY CYCLONE BRYGAR. ■

HARMAGEDDON/Warrior Vega, a cyborg, right, appears before Jo Azuma as a test of his ESP abilities. Below, Princess Luna and Vega fly over Tokyo as Luna telepathically transmits a message to Jo Azuma so that he may join her in her battle with King Gemma, also known as the Evil Entity, in this motion picture from Kadokawa Films based on an 18-volume Japanese manga.

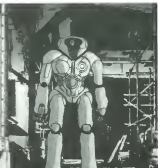


Our grateful appreciation goes to Haruo Higuchi who translated this reference material upon which this article was based. We also wish to credit Jane E. McGwire for additional material.

Credits

SPACE ADVENTURE—COBRA: (SUPESU AOBENCHA KOBURA). A Tokyo Movie Shinsha Production. Distributed by Toho Iwowa. Executive producers, Waka Fujio, Tetsuo Katayama. Producer, Tetsuo Iwouchi. Director, Osamu Dezaki. Animation director, Akio Sugino. Original story, Ruchii Iwasawa. Screenplay, Suichi Terawawa, Hiroyuki Yamazaki. Produced in collaboration with Kowa International. Released July 3, 1982. Color. Dolby stereo. 91 minutes.

HARMAGEDDON (GEMMA TAISEN): A Kadokawa Films Production. Distributed by Toho-Iwowa. Executive producer, Haruki Kadokawa. Producer, Susumu Akatagawa. Director, Taro Riu. Based on "Gemma Taisen" by Kamumasa Hirai and Shotaro Ishimori. Screenplay, Makoto Naito, Chieo Katsura, Mamoru Masaki. Supervisor, Masao Maruyama. Director of photography, Iwao Yamaki. Animation director, Tetsuo Noda. Special animation, Yoshitani Kanada. Assistant director, Susumu Ishizaki. Art director, Takamasa Mokuo. Character designer, Katsuhiko Ootomo. Released March 12, 1983. Color.





move over garfield, here comes your competition from japan

The importance of comic books to filmmakers is perhaps best exemplified by the case of a character named Doraemon, two of whose feature-length animated adventures, DORAEMON—NOBITA NO KYOINKU and DORAEMON—NOBITA NO UCHU KATAKUSHI, were Toho's third and second biggest money-making releases in, respectively, 1980 and 1981 (Toho acted as distributor, although Shogakukan Organization actually produced the films).

Doraemon is a robot cat from the 23rd century who lives in the present with a little boy named Nobita and his family. Whenever Nobita finds himself in trouble, his futuristic fellow friend reaches into a pocket "four dimensional pocket" and withdraws secret weapons—a bamboo copter for making quick escapes or a special lipstick that forces the person to whose mouth it is applied to tell the truth.

Doraemon debuted in the pages of a comic magazine, Gakkenin Zasshi, in 1970. Its creator is Fujio Fujio, a pseudonym for two cartoonists, one named Fujimoto, the other Abiko (hence, Fujiko), both also responsible for the popular "Goba Q" strip about a lovable ghost.

Shogakukan, publisher of Gakkenin Zasshi, reports that fan letters addressed to Doraemon or Fujiko number about 100,000 a month. Further, paperback collections of Doraemon's exploits—18 titles in all—have sold over 30 million copies, a figure the publisher says is equalled only

by the combined sales of its 38 paperback collections of yet another cartoon character, baseball star Gola Ben.

In addition to his Toho features (he cat starred in a third and fourth feature in 1982, DORAEMON—NOBITA NO QAIMAH and DORAEMON FESTIVAL), Doraemon has also appeared in a campaign organized by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and has been the star of TV commercials for confections, frozen foods, toys, soft drinks and tea. For children wondering what to do with their allowance money, there are an estimated 300 different kinds of Doraemon-related products to choose from, including badges, dolls, stationery and savings banks.

A major factor in Doraemon's impact on the Japanese is, not unexpectedly, television. Premiering on TV Asahi in April of '79, the adventures of the blue-headed feline were broadcast Monday through Friday from 6:30-7:00 p.m., regularly garnering ratings in excess of 20%. Now (as of May, 1982) DORAEMON is shown only on Fridays from 7:00-7:30 p.m., but still cops impressive ratings. Indeed, during any given week, the program will make it into the Top Thirty Programs chart compiled by the Tokyo-based ratings firm, Video Research.

Putting words into Doraemon's mouth is Nobuyo Oyama, a 20-year veteran dubber whose past voices include those of a goby, a cricket and the leg of a desk ("That one was

easy," she avers, "since no one has any idea what a desk leg talks [lot?]). Oyama is noted for her hoarsely unique vocalizations and is in constant demand, especially when the character to be dubbed is an animal or exceptionally naughty. Nonetheless, she refuses to take more than one dubbing assignment during any given TV season, although she is not averse to appearing in TV series and is currently (as of May 12, 1982) a regular on two TBS offerings, one on TV Asahi and one on Nagoya TV.

Oyama, whose fame is beginning to eclipse that of her well-known husband, actor Kinsuke Tsumagawa, has her own theory about the surge in Doraemon's popularity. "It's all a matter of good timing," she says. "Five or six years ago, not all that many people read science fiction stories. But times have changed, and now even kindergarten's know about time machines. Doraemon, being an SF creation and cute besides, is a natural."

No shrinking violet, Oyama is positive that no one else can do the cat's voice, and Doraemon's creators agree, saying the cat's image and voice are "perfectly matched." About the only complaint Oyama has about the job is that the pressure she must put on her stomach to produce Doraemon's voice makes her hungry and, consequently, she feels she's now beginning to look like the roly-poly cat. ■

Reprinted from *Variety*, May 12, 1982



REVIEWS



Poster for Daiei's *HAUNTED CASTLE*.

HAUNTED CASTLE

The director has built a gripping film out of cliché.

In 1726, Lord Nabeshima (Koichi Uenoyama) of Saga takes a fancy to a blind monk's sister, Sayo (Mitsuyo Kamei). Monk Matsushiro (Akira Tada) lives on a small "sympathy allowance" of 3000 *roku* (*yen*) a year of land, though once his clan dominated the region. Still, he refuses to bow to Lord Nabeshima's lecherous interest in

Sayo. During his regular game of *go* (an Asian variety of chess), Matsushiro detects the Lord and his chamberlain (Mutsuhiro Tsuru) trying to cheat at the game. The chamberlain denies having removed a piece from the gameboard. In the ensuing argument, the Lord and chamberlain tell the monk whose dying words are "it's unfair, grieve!" At that moment, in the temple, Sayo sees a strong break on the blind man's lute. The chamberlain has the body dumped in a well and the well filled with sand.

Tama, the black cat which earlier tried to keep the monk from leaving the temple in the first place, brings a bloodied bit of cloth to Sayo, which she recognizes as part of her brother's clothing. Determined to leave Saga the next morning, she chases suicide over banishment, cutting open her stomach, asking the cat Tama to lap her blood as she dies. In this way the cat gains supernatural powers and can haunt the castle.

Komon (Kijiro Hongo), a sympathetic vassal, tries both to resolve the mystery of the monk's death (not knowing his own master is the culprit) and to divert the castle of the murderous ghost-cat. The cat first possesses the body of a lady-in-waiting, who becomes a grotesque female spirit killing innocent women in the castle. Vassal Hanzemon Komon manages to slay the possessed woman, but the spirit merely takes over Lord Nabeshima's wife, Sayo (Mitsuyo Kamei). Thus the Lord grows ill from making love to his own wife.

A weird exercise ends in the death of several priests. Vassal Komon elicits the aid of the temple's abbot, who creates a shirt inscribed with protective sutras which he will wear while battling the ghost woman, a similar kind of device being used in the story of Hsiao the Eadless in *KWAIDAN*, directed by Masako Kobayashi.

The scenes when the cat-ghost woman is leaping and slinking along the roof, with two spears hanging from her flesh, are spectacularly horrific. At the cost of many lives, Komon finally succeeds in killing the spirit, and the dead body of the cat Tama travels as a lightning bolt to the well where the blind monk was buried. Lord Nabeshima gives up his sexual excesses as a result of the terrifying consequences, renounces the dead monk's family, and sends Komon off to find the heirs of Sayo and Matsushiro.

The elements of *HAUNTED CASTLE* are very much typical of the genre. The blind victim, supernatural cats, and frighteningly grotesque ghosts who flow around murdering with their supernatural strength, are all basic themes. Though riddled with cliché, *HAUNTED CASTLE* is superbly told, director Tokuzo Tanaka having an ability to take stock elements and create films

which are gripping from beginning to end, as he has done with numerous genres of Japanese film. The film abhors the standard theme of revenge by not having the villainous lord simply killed, making him pendant instead. The hero of the piece must balance his feelings of real justice against his responsibility to a lord whose actions started the grief. This dilemma is genuinely resolved, rather than avoided by the easier ending of having everybody killed off. A reasonable script, excellent widescreen cinematography, and competent direction lends *HAUNTED CASTLE* a feeling of actual legend, rather than of exploitation cinema.

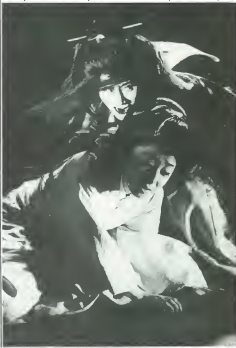
Other fantasy films by Tanaka include the perfectly dreadful *SASABUJI OMORI* (THE GIRL WITH BAMBOO LEAVES, Daiei, 1969) about an acrobatic woman who can use bamboo leaves as though they were steel darts, killing people left and right; *THE WHALE GOD* (*KUJIRA GAMI*, Daiei, 1962) about a demonic killer whale which terrorizes a fishing village; *THE SNOW WOMAN* (*KAIDAN YUKI JORO*, Daiei, 1968).

which is also the subject of an episode of Kobayashi's classic *KWAIDAN*. One of Tanaka's earliest films has the evocative title *OGRE OF MOUNT DE* (*OGRE YAMA SHUTENDO*, Daiei, 1960), but I've not been able to ascertain whether or not it is really about an ogre, though a subtitled print does exist in America. All of his supernatural films have medieval settings.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson

HEROKU KAIJYODEN (aka MYSTERY OF THE CAT WOMAN), A Daiei Motion Picture Co., Ltd. film. Released December 20, 1969. Director: Tokuzo Tanaka. Screenplay: Shozaburo Asai. Photography: Hiroshi Imai. Art director: Seichu Ota. Editor: Hiroshi Yamada. Music: Hiroshi Minna. Assistant director: Ikuo Endo. Filmed in Fuji color and Daeifscope. Cost: Kijiro Hongo, Naomichi Kobayashi, Mitsuyo Kamei, Mutsuhiro Tsuru, Koichi Uenoyama, Akane Kawasaki, Naotoku Iwa, Ikuo Mori, Aketsu Toda, Yosuke Terajima, Shozo Nanbu, Shintaro Nanjo, Kazuo Tamaki, Shosaku Sugiyama, Seishiro Hara.

Mitsuyo Kamei as the evil spirit about to enter the body of Naomichi Kobayashi.



REVIEWS

VILLAGE OF 8 GRAVESTONES

In spite of length the film displays an intriguing style and content.

A young man discovers he is heir to a large estate in **VILLAGE OF EIGHT GRAVESTONES**, but the moment he comes in contact with his heritage, villagers begin to die under agonizing situations. The victims are descendants of villagers who conspired four hundred years earlier to drug and murder eight samurai who had tried to become farmers in the area. The village's history has been marked by periodic mass murders, shown in vivid and frightening flashbacks. Since the young hero's father was himself a mass murderer, the villagers are certain that the man orphaned in childhood and only now reinstated with the village is responsible for the new series of murders. For a while the viewer wonders, too.

In gruesome, arty flashbacks to the 15th Century, we witness what was the source of the curse of the eight gravestones. The leader of the eight samurai was last to fall, refusing to die until he could put the curse on the village. He is truly a great screen

monster as his strangely echoing voice promises doom to the conspirators and all their descendants. When he is finally beheaded, his expression remains animated by gleeful certainty that his curse will come true.

The film is for a long while ambiguous about the possibility of a supernatural explanation for the murders. We're led to believe that a woman new to the village is using the people's superstitious nature in order to murder all who stand in the way of her taking over the land.

Kiyoshi Atsumi—star of more than two dozen "Dora-san" comedies—plays an amiable detective who begins an exhaustive search of records and events, trying to solve the mystery. He travels around Japan tracing the original eight samurai to their birth places, checking family records and their descendants, until the trail leads right back to the village of eight grave stones. He proves to his satisfaction

that both the young man heir to the property and the widow new to the village are descended from the leader of the samurai who cursed the village. Together they are the catalyst that spells doom for the descendants of those who committed a crime four centuries before.

It takes an unwieldy length of time for the film, based on a bestselling novel by Seicho Tokuman, to place all these complications of plot out where the viewer can see them. Thirty minutes of this lengthy thriller could have been trimmed without injury to the story, improving the pace. However, slow as it moves, it's an exceedingly intriguing film both in style and content. Scenes deep underground in a truly eerie world are particularly overlong, but the sets and locations are so powerful it's perhaps understandable that the director, Yoshitane Nomura, could not tear the camera away.

The payoff for the long wait is spectacular. The murderers become possessed of the ghost of the samurai, turning into a cat-eyed monster pursuing the heir through subterranean passages, until his own latent power triggers a deadly earthquake. The sound and visual effects are meeting the music (by Yasuji Akatsugawa) appropriately melodramatic. The epilog, with the disjunctive exploring every thing, is unfortunately necessary, since key bits of information were left out before the climax, and things need to be tied up neatly with a closing lecture. It's too bad the film couldn't have ended on the phenomenal climax without the postscript to explain how the curse worked. Still, even with the flaws which better planning and editing could have cured, **VILLAGE OF EIGHT GRAVESTONES** remains a superior tale of the supernatural, one which deserves wider circulation than it has so far received.

As the film ends, we are given a final overwhelming image: the ghosts of the eight samurai standing on a hillside gazing down into the ravaged village, laughing. Pretty spooky.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson

YATSUHAKA MURA A Shochiku Co., Ltd. film. Color and Panavision. 131 minutes. Released October 29, 1977. Director: Yoshitane Nomura. Original story: Seicho Tokuman. Screenplay: Shinobu Hashimoto. Director of photography: Takashi Kawamata. Music: Yasuji Akatsugawa. Art director: Kiyoshi Mito. Cast: Kiyoshi Atsumi, Kenichi Hagihara, Mayumi Ogawa, Ryoko Nishino.

Armor worn by all the ninja in their final assault on Shogun Ieyasu.

DEATH OF THE SHOGUN

A superb if often incredible adventure.

Kinnosuke Utsunoyama plays Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu in **DEATH OF THE SHOGUN**, a camp adventure more reminiscent of the best Chinese sword epics than a samurai film. (Realistic sword battles are interspersed with supernatural and reprehensible feats.) History commingles with outright fantasy. Ieyasu's claim that an resulting in script has been molded into a memorial tale is historical. The use of drugs to induce comatose captives hallucinations among Ieyasu's armies is, of course, pure fiction. This sort of mixture works surprisingly well.

Hiroko Matsukata plays Yukimura Sanada, a fanatic out to destroy the Shogun by any means. The theme to some degree parallels that of the *Midnight Samurai*, Last of the Ninja series from the 1960's, but the ultimate conclusion of this new version is very different. Sanada's most important ally is the super-ninja spy called Monkey. Monkey's introductory scene depicts a Songoku-like anthropomorphic monkey collecting Buddhist relics, in the Japanese version of a Chinese religious folk tale. They are the subject of many Chinese dramas, and the subject of a Japanese television series, available in a dubbed version but shown only in Great Britain. In the television series, Priest Sanzo was played by an actress rather than an actor. This introduction of the ninja Monkey is so cleverly filmed and edited that many a viewer is left uncertain that they really saw a monkey fighting. The illusion is never repeated, but the apeline appearance of Monkey is subtly maintained.

in flashback sequences, supernatural forces invite a mass murderer to appear in the "Village of 8 Gravestones" on a periodic basis during a span of four centuries. His mummified body is eventually discovered in a cavern.



Photo © 1977 Shochiku Co. Ltd.

REVIEWS

throughout his portrayal in *OEATH OF THE SHOGUN*.

Senada and the ninja group make half a dozen graphically filmed attempts on the aging Shogun's life, some of them straightforward swordplay with excellent staging and choreography, some of them spectacular special effects sequences. In one special effects-oriented sequence, a hurricane lifts the combatants into the air, resulting in a sky battle.

The final encounter, with Senada's assassins all dressed in brilliant red armor and attacking Iyeyasu's guards one by one (each introducing himself as Senada), is a gorgeous melodrama and a fine celebration of martial arts. The ending, with the Shogun growling for survival in the wilds, asking grass to stay alive, and pursued by the real Senada to a surprising conclusion, is very unsettling but perfectly satisfying. The viewer is left with the feeling that this has been a superb, if often unrealistic, adventure.

An epilog shows us the only survivor

among the assassins, Monkey, performing rinkyu finger exercises on a mountain top, against a changing cosmos. There is a strong suggestion in this that Monkey was indeed a supernatural agent, whose coming into the world was heralded by a great meteor, and who can in some way influence even the position of the heavens, not unlike the monkey deity *Songoku*.

Many a viewer may think they prefer the intense realism of directors such as Akira Kurosawa, but Saden Nakajima is, in his own way, as grand an artist. He is the George Lucas of Japanese adventure fantasy.

By Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Revised from a version published in *Martial Arts Movies* magazine
SANDA YUKIMURA NO BORNOKU (aka THE SHOGUN ASSASSINS), A Toei Co., Ltd. film. Released in 1979. Director: Saden Nakajima. Cast: Kinnosuke Yoroizya, Hiroki Matsukita, Hiroyuki Sanada, Tetsuro Tanba.

ALRIGHT, MY FRIEND

Peter Fonda as an E.T. caught up in weak sci-fi allegory of the Japanese society.

Peter Fonda plays a superstrong man from outer space who falls to Earth where he is chased by evil doers called the Doors who want to clone him and build a master race. Shattering him from home are three Japanese who, even though they speak Japanese, have no trouble understanding this English speaking alien. At any rate, Fonda the extra-terrestrial, by film's end, is able to say "I'm home."

You get the feeling that this film came about when Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland turned to a group of their peers and said, "Hey, kids, let's put on an allegory!" The Doors, with their somber suits and ties and short haircuts, are, it seems, meant to represent conservative, male dominated Japanese society. Upon capturing Reona Hirota, they dress her in a kimono and set her to arranging flowers. They apparently lobotomize Hiroyuki Watanabe so that he performs his assigned job with uncompiling, robotic efficiency.

The main failing of the supposedly trenchant social criticism is that the libertarian alternative to the Doors is symbolized by these unattractive saps with the studiously "cute" nicknames Mimimi, Monika (who is male), and Hachi. They are played by, respectively, Reona Hirota, Yoshiyuki Nao, and Hiroyuki Watanabe. Hirota is reasonably pleasant and has a rather nice figure; Nao isn't and doesn't; Watanabe is becoming another Victor Mature

The scientist and director is Ryu Murakami, a winner of Japan's most prestigious literary prize whose well-known love of films is evidenced by several cinematic references. Jirapach Nao's Doctor, with his Mandarin manners and Mao style grey tunic, is a virtual copy of "Dr. No." Hirota and Nao, and in a throwaway scene recalling *BLOW UP*, play tennis without rackets or balls; and, of course, the film's central premise—alien comes to Earth—is composed of parts of *E.T.*, *THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH*, and *SUPERMAN*. That Fonda's strength is sapped by ordinary garden variety tomatoes suggests that Murakami is even familiar with the combat *SPY*, *ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES*. Good for him.

A *Variety*, May 25, 1983 reprint.

GARDOBI, MAI FURENDO. A Kitty film. Distributed by Toho International Color. 110 mins. Released May, 1983.
Producer: Hidenori Taga. Director: Ryu Murakami. Screenplay: Ryu Murakami, based on his original story. Director of photography: Kazuo Okazaki. Assistant to director: Louchi Nakajima. Art director: Osamu Yamaguchi. Sound: Hideo Nishizaki. Lighting: Kazuo Shimomura. Editor: Sachiko Yamaki. Music director: Kazuhiko Kato. Cast: Peter Fonda, Jirapach Nao, Reona Hirota, Hiroyuki Watanabe, Yoshiyuki Nao, and Kumi Asahi.

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J F F J
BACK
ISSUES

JAPANESE GIANTS Number 7

This issue features an in-depth look at the Toho classic *ATRAAGON* plus film news, the latest in Japanese animation and more. Send \$3.50 to Ed Godziszewski 5847 N. Markham Chicago, IL 60646 coming soon...

TRIVIA

Not so much madness this time, I'm afraid. Made some suggestions sent to me by the faithful out there. Your support is gratefully appreciated, to be sure. Were my own testimony so supportive?

What say we tackle television first. From that vast wasteland, via Square Pegs comes the following dialogue. It occurs when a female student comments upon a rumor she heard that someone was supposedly creating a class monster.¹¹ Oh

you mean like Radan. Oh, no, that would have to have been Mr. and Mrs. Radan. How about Michael? He was in hotel Johnny. He immediately negotiates into the Malibu chain. The girl, in deeper action demands: "We need help!" Johnny replies, "Hey, how about Johnny's kid's flying robot?" For cat, train, And thanks, Mark Ramsey, for this gem.

From the great movie emerges a most humorous analysis of monster movies by Dave Barry, whose material for *Fortune* Associates is syndicated to newspapers throughout the U.S. Mr. Barry is hilarious and that concept talent from his article "Warrior at the Movies" is a fine example:

"The best movies, as you might expect, were made by the Japanese, who exported them in large batches to the United States in the 1950s. These movies generally feature large reptiles as insects that come out of the ocean and kill large quantities of Japanese. These movies are artistically balanced: On the one hand, you get the thrill of watching a large reptile or insect wreak havoc; on the other hand, you feel secure in the knowledge that it is wreaking havoc on people who don't even speak English!"

An avid fan of heavy metal music, I chanced upon *Alfred or Metal* by Anvil (JVC, LXT 1136) which offers a supercharged, time-reversed "Mothra" a variation on the Mothra tale which focuses on the allegorical nature of the Toho film. You might wish to check it out.

Finally, Joe Saine, entrepreneur of King's Casino in Toledo, Ohio, and dealer of fine magazines, this one for instance, advised us of a set of cards issued by an art supply company in Melbourne Australia. Each "Totia Monstru Swap Card" was a bonus with the purchase of a Totia nymonic por-

Cover art for DC Comics' third issue of *Captain Curves and His Amazing Zoo Crew!* whose story is about a certain glaci named "Froggiller." Submitted by Stephen J. Kravits through the courtesy of DC Comics' Mike Ryan.

The set consists of a total of 35 cards, measuring 1 1/2" x 2 1/2" printed in glossy colors (hard to see black and white scores) but what makes the set so unusual is the fact that the great majority of the cards (31 to be exact, display Japanese kanjis and two giant live action robots, Gaijin and Ultraman. The oddball card is a tight shot of Lon Chaney's wolfman.

I can only guess that the cards were distributed in 1966 or 1967 since the Japanese films and TV shows from which the names were culled were

A sample of the 36 "Data Monster Sweep Cards" from Australia. What a collector's dream!



released in Japan at that time. However, I had long thought Japanese monster fare was off limits in Australia, and that it wasn't until the seventies that the films were allowed to be imported. No copyright date marks on the cards, so one can only surmise a date of issuance.

With a thank Bob Johnson and Sean McDonald
for their unpublished contributions

All for now: TE Marshall McLuhan stops springing in his grave.



Fanzine Fixes

Midnight Marquise #30 36 wraparound, offset printed pages. Now all typeset—and with the addition of color covers! For only \$8 above the likes of an analysis of *DUMB WITCH*, a winner of the comedy genre, returns of Abbott

[illegible]

Cherubstone #10 (Subtitled "for the music you love") expanded from a digest format to magazine size. The new issue boasts a hefty count of 36 well-produced, offset-printed pages with a selection of timely subjects \$2 will let you score with a look at new line music, interview with Saul Perlmutter and review of his CDMAN score, interview with James Hauer and review of his music for *STAR TREK II*, interview with composer Ernest Gold, reviews of MARCO POLLO's and HALLOWEEN 2's music, European fantasy film scores on record, and more. CD #10, a well-produced fanzine is to film music what *Cinefile* is to the arena of special visual effects. Send to: Sordid Lizards, P.O. Box 70838, Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

The Jade Screen #3: *Artificial Acts* (Museum) also is gone, but this magazine returns, better, as ever! There are 86 pages worth of superb artwork (photos and gwei), written material. This *Review* is a pleasure to read. Some of the contents concern retrospectives of Ang Lee's *Ying* reviews/analyses of *TOWERS OF DRAGON*, *HINGGLOO MASTER WITH CRACK FINGERS*, *AN EYE FOR AN EYE*, *THE TREASURE HUNTERS*, and many more, interviews with Fu Sheng and Carol Hwang part 1 of a comic story version of the life of Bruce Lee (issue 50) \$4.50 for your copy to Karen Shau: 9783 52 Avenue Road, S1, Philadelphia, IL 33290

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FROGZILLA!

FUNNIES

THE MAN WHO PLAYED GODZILLA

BOY MOU•RO•AD GO•U•ME•ON

EVEN AS EARLY AS 1956, SOME SAID HARUO NAKAJIMA IDENTIFIED TOO CLOSELY WITH THE ROLE OF **GOJIRA**.



ONE DAY, WHEN THE AMERICAN FILM VERSION WAS SCREENED AT THE STUDIO, HE EXPLODED!

AIEENGAAH! RAYMOND BURR UPSTAGES ME, **GOJIRA!** I DEMAND ALL PRINTS BE RE-CALLED AND HIS SCENES CUT!



THEN THERE IS ONLY ONE HONORABLE THING TO DO...



PAYS LATER, A HOLLYWOOD HOME...

RAYMOND, SOMEONE'S AT THE DOOR!

I'LL SEE WHO IT IS, HONEY...



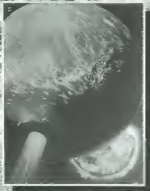
HARUO SEEMS MORE CHEERFUL THESE LAST FEW WEEKS!

THE ONE THING I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IS...



JUST HOW DID HE GROW HIS NEW FINGER?





GORATH



Japanese Fantasy Film Journal # 15 (1983)

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